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EVANGELICAL UNION DOCTRINAL SERIES.

*(SECOND ISSUE.)*

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.



THE  
FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

BY

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## PREFACE.

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"EVER in my distresses and my loneliness," writes Carlyle, "has fantasy turned, full of longing, to that unknown Father, who perhaps far from me, perhaps near, either way invisible, might have taken me to his paternal bosom, there to lie screened from many a woe. Thou beloved Father, dost thou still, shut out from me only by these penetrable curtains of earthly space, wend to and fro in the crowd of the living? Or art thou hidden by those far thicker curtains of the Everlasting Night, or rather of the Everlasting Day, through which my mortal eye and outstretched arms need not strive to reach?" It is so a human heart works along the lines of the lower and the higher relations. It feels its way to a

Father. Its longings lead it over all the boundaries by which a false science or a vain philosophy would confine it. The Father, to whom all the children created in His image are dear, is drawing them to Himself by many a cord. Men who understand this will not be moved by what is going on in the laboratory or the dissecting-room. The universe means more than chemistry and nerves. It is not into empty space affection spreads out its arms. By early sicknesses, by early deaths, by many a blighted hope, by heartaches which no words can picture, the great Father is leading the human heart to Himself. The goodness of God is leading men to repentance. The patience of God is giving men an opportunity of testing every scheme by which they would solve the problem of the world. He waits to be gracious.

Science has many irons in the fire, and with deftly blows is hammering some of them into formidable weapons in whose presence Christian men are expected to tremble. Why should it be so? What secret has human

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thought discovered that can enable the race to do without the Father? Can men stand in the bosom of a family and think only of fate or force?

The following chapters are written in the faith that nothing can shake the idea of the Fatherhood of God. The subject is vast, and has many sides, at some of which we have tried to look with such light as we had at our command. The pages produced are simple, but we trust they are not on that account dull. Theological controversy has gathered a considerable literature round the question, a review of which would be interesting enough had that been our aim; our object, however, is a practical one, and we have tried to keep that in view throughout.

God may be fitly styled Father: Father of all things being: Father of all intellectual beings especially: the Father particularly of all men; and among men, chiefly of good men.—*Barrow.*

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That Maker and Father of this universe it is hard to find out, and having found Him, it is impossible to express Him unto all men.—*Plato.*

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No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.—*John.*

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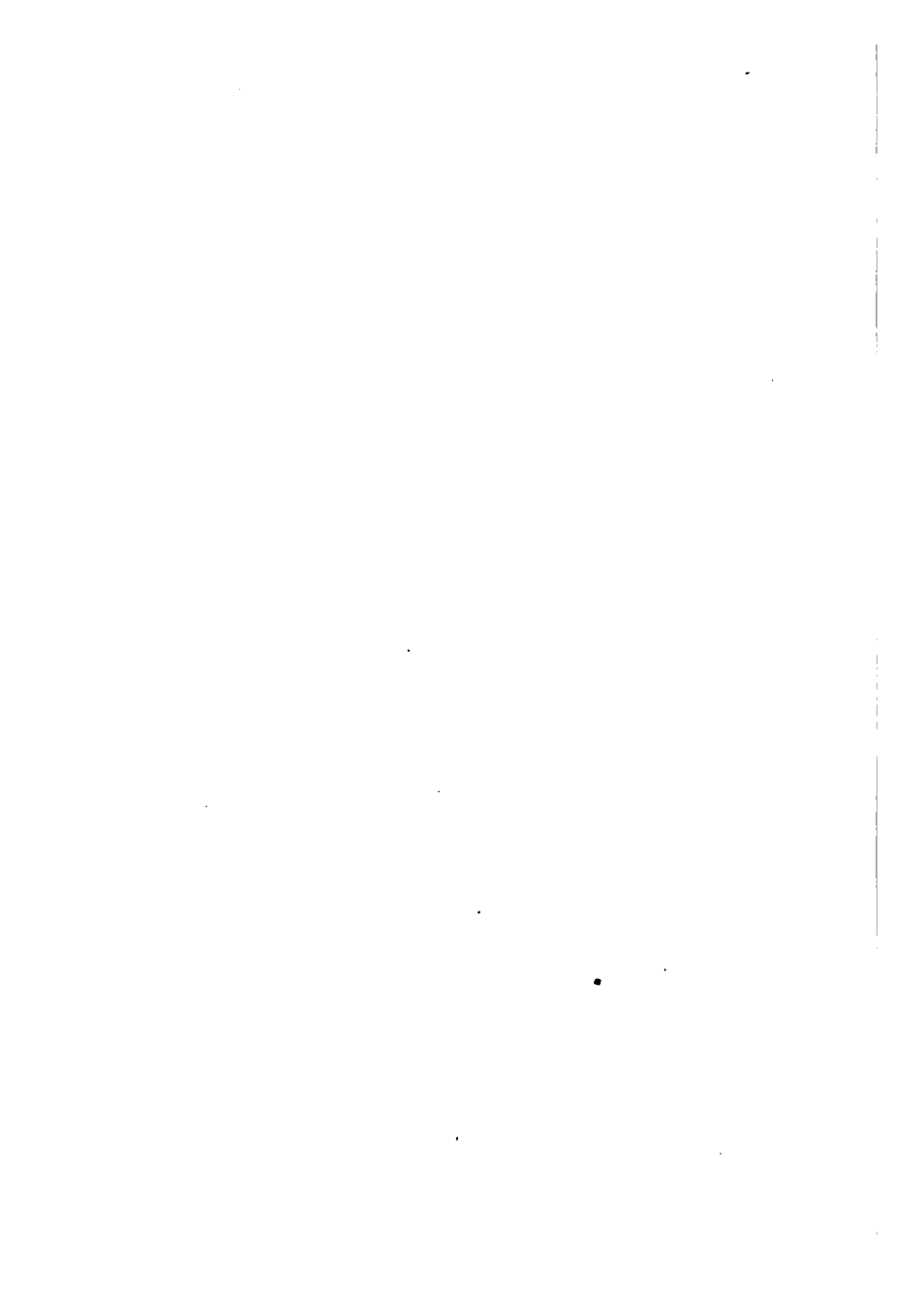
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# THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FATHER.

"HE who thinks," says Jules Simon, "of the family tie, who feels the sweetness and beauty of family relationship, needs no other proof than this that the hand which has made us is truly a paternal one. O God! O Parent of the world! Thy providence will for ever be adored and comprehended by the heart of a father." The last word of defective science, of false philosophy, and of idolatrous systems, comes a long way short of saying "Father." How much there is in that name! What a light it throws upon "the riddle of the painful earth!" What a "Rock of Ages" it is for the weak and weary heart of man! Beauty, order, law, and force have doubtless their deep meanings for thoughtful minds, but there is a deeper depth for both thought and feeling in the word Father. Gathering up into itself all that is great in God and good

for man, all other names about which poets dream and philosophers speculate, and at which superstition trembles, pale in its presence as pale the stars when the sun is shining. When the soul's ear has once heard the sound of it, and the heart has once felt its touch, and memory brings up, as Henry Vaughan says,—

“These early days, when I  
Shined in mine angel-infancy;”

a great desire takes possession of the soul, akin to that of Bunyan's when he says, “I wished with all my heart that I might be a little child again.” To have grieved, offended, and angered such a Father, is the darkest shadow that rests upon the soul's life. To be allowed to come back, though broken and bruised by many a fall over many a stumbling stone, and yet find Him a Father, and still be allowed to call Him by that name, is surely the greatest joy the heart can feel.

“I am the Father's child.” Is there anything in science, in philosophy, or in theology, to hinder a man from saying that? If there be, can there then be anything in such spheres of thought, or indeed in any sphere of thought whatever, that can have anything like a permanent and powerful influence upon his life for good? “By whom shall Jacob arise?”

This old question has some meaning still for these new times. What can the fugitive expect who has nowhere to run but up the winding stair of some ruined tower? The heavens are scarcely to be reached by that road, and the bosom of the earth is too cold and hard to offer any inducement to him to fling himself down again. The elevators of man are not likely to lift him far if they exclude from their appliances the one thought whose influence we might expect him most permanently to feel. With the far up heavens above him and the hard cold earth beneath, there is nothing for him but to sit down in despair. The propagandists of doctrines, whose logical outcome can be nothing short of mental and moral paralysis, can scarcely be looked upon as bringing good news to men. It was otherwise with Jesus Christ and with the most successful of His disciples. We know how frequently the name Father was uttered by the Saviour. It was His central thought, round which He gathered an endless number of luminous circles. Worlds of anticipation and of retrospection burst upon the view as Jesus Christ teaches men to think about the Father. The broad shadows that have fallen upon life's highway grow thin and pass away. The

darker clouds receive a silvery lining that speaks of light above and behind. If there are still discords in society which the ear can too easily detect, there is at the same time a music sublime and all-mastering, and which fills the soul with unspeakable joy as it thinks about the Father. Hence Christian hymns and sermons and prayers are largely influenced by the idea of Fatherhood. Christian poets, as might be expected, are fond of it. It pervades Christian feeling and speech. Minds revolving round it see in it a great light. Ears attuned to the higher music, hear in it the sweetest sounds. On the other hand, no man can feel so weary, so weak, and so lonely, as the man who, looking all round and all through life, is tempted to say that he has no Father. Philosophically, the Christian has the advantage of all others by taking his position on the idea of Fatherhood. If they have a higher conception to give, he is open to entertain it; meantime he can afford to stand with firm foot until they have reached his altitude. He may fail now and again to show by thought and speech how exalted his position is, but that is because, as Bunyan would say—

“My dark and cloudy words, they do but hold  
The truth as cabinets inclose the gold.”

The treasure is in earthen vessels, and the material is not always, or indeed often, so refined as it might be.

Every great idea is supposed to have its day. Its hour and power may come silently and unperceived, but they come whether men in great numbers are waiting for them or not. It may very possibly be true that when God has a great word to utter, He may have prepared some ear into which to utter it; but the thought which the new word makes known may make the soul that receives it a lonely thing for many a day. That word may take a man apart from his fellowmen, and for a time dig great gulfs between him and them. The preparations for its triumph are slow and gradual, even as we find in the processes of nature when the results are great. The oak requires a long time to come to maturity. We rarely watch the progress of a bud, but the bursting of the flower sometimes takes us by surprise. It is so, we imagine, with the idea of the Fatherhood. Its progress, not only in modern thought, but in the Scriptures, finds its analogies among the slow growths of nature. Beyond doubt, Jesus alone could adequately reveal the Father, and teach man with what feelings to pronounce the name; but that

thought would scarcely warrant us to say, as there is some tendency to do, that we can find few, if any, traces of the Father till Jesus appeared. In an American work before us, it is held as a *golden axiom* that we do not get the idea of Divine Fatherhood till we get it from Christ. Dr. Candlish concludes that "the Fatherhood of God was not revealed to the ancient Church, either as a relation to all intelligent creatures generally, or as a relation belonging to the obedient angels and believing men specially;" but Dr. Crawford, by a refutation which leaves nothing to be desired, shows how rash are the conclusions to which Dr. Candlish had come. "Human lips," Steir maintains, "never pronounced the words 'My Father' till Jesus did it." But that is a position which cannot be sustained. Of course, no human lips ever uttered them as Jesus did; but that can never do away with the indications of the doctrine as given before Christ came.

The history of theology, however, reminds us how possible it is for essential thoughts to fall into the background, and how necessary it is to bring them forward, and give them fresh utterance and emphasis. Religious thought and feeling may move round the ideas of

Cause, Creator, Preserver, Judge, and King, and yet not see very much of the Father. Theology, like a stained window, has to be looked at from within. The Fatherhood, as taught by Jesus, is the true centre from which to view the beauty and the harmony of the whole. All round the circles of creed and conduct, the supreme idea we have of God will be deeply felt. The roots of our life and power are there. There, too, is our peace. How much even a Christian's notions of God may be shaped and coloured by importations from his daily pursuits and favourite tendencies, it might be somewhat difficult to say. A man is busy with great material works, and he thinks of God as a wise Master Builder. Or he is a student of law, and he thinks of God as a Lawgiver. Or the care of many concerns is on his heart, and he thinks of God as a Provider. Or his mind is taken up with the progress of empires, and he thinks of God as Ruler and Judge. Or there is beauty all around, and God is thought of as an Artist. Many a weary heart could tell how very possible it is for even Christian preaching to conceal the Father. A limited atonement, universal foreordination, unconditional election, regeneration before faith, have been bad

mirrors by which to reflect upon the people the glory of the Father. And so the people have not seen Him, have not enjoyed Him, have not obeyed Him, because they knew not how or where to find Him. But, when a deeper study of the Bible, and a truer conception of what God is to men, have thrown a diviner light upon the churches here and there—when, now and again, voices have been heard, as in these modern times they have been heard, telling of a God who loves the whole world, and of a Saviour who shed His precious blood for the whole world, and of a Divine Spirit that strives with the whole world—hearts have become responsive, because they could find in this God a loving and forgiving Father. Gradually this reassertion of fundamental truth is working its way. Its day of full power is sure to come. Like the little organism borne on the breeze, it has had to bide its time and be tossed about by many a wind, till it could find the suitable soil in which to root itself, and secure the conditions of a lasting growth. The fruit it has already borne, and the fresh seed it has already scattered over widening fields, may be seen in many a book, in many a pulpit, and in many a church court as well.

Controversy is scarcely the most eligible



gate through which to pass into the goodly land which is opened up to Christian thought by the consideration of the Divine Fatherhood. The sight of intellectual giants, worthy of one another's prowess, and in their turn "now on their feet and now on the floor," has occasionally its healthy excitement for those who look on; but it is amid calmer moods, and with an atmosphere less agitated, that our hearts get near the heart of the Father. Let us eschew controversy then, at least as much as may be consistent with a becoming estimate of all the practical bearings of the subject. The common Fatherhood is large enough to embrace us all. The race is not forlorn. No man is an orphan. However far, like a great prodigal son, the race may have wandered, the Father still lives, and He still loves. The door of the home is more than ajar. It is known that a warm welcome is given by the Father to every child who returns from his wandering. Hence, even in the far country poetry will dream about Him, philosophy reason about Him, want yearn for Him, while Christian feeling rests and rejoices in Him. It has found the Father.

This, then, is the point of view from which life and all the universe become intensified in

interest for us. Philosophy and science will have much to do for some time with these "obstinate questionings" about cause and creation; for us the joy of life will be that we have a Father. Throughout these pages that thought will be seen throwing light down into many a dark place in human history, as well as upon the uplands round which no cloud can gather. God's child, man, will be seen standing out with a stature, a bearing, a history, and destiny truly impressive. The feelings of the infinite Father will be seen gathering round him with a fulness, a fondness, and a force that might well make him filial and true. Angels will be seen coming to his aid, that his path might be safe and successful. Sunshine and rain, and all things which science calls the forces of nature, will be seen working together to spread his table and make his bed. As the "Holy Herbert" sings,—

"For us the winds do blow,  
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow."

Thus providence will become to our thought fatherly, for "the Father knoweth that we have need of all these things." Religion will be vitalised as with the love of a Father's heart.

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Theology will be wider, warmer, freer, more full of power, because it will be, in one form or another, thought about the Father. It will not exclude the idea of the Creator, nor the King, nor the Judge, nor the Lawgiver, but as the paternal is the primary relation, and is the wider circle which incloses all the rest, and takes us past the throne, as it were, into the home-hearth amid the joys of the family life, we shall learn, whatever troubled times may bring, daily to call upon the Father.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE LIVING FATHER.

THE Divine Life lies outside the circle of biological science. What we know of it is learned, not by experiment, but by authority. We are not able to translate into our words all its meaning; but that in no way disqualifies us for accepting from Jesus Christ the idea of "the *living Father*." Among all the masters who have taken it upon them to instruct men, Jesus Christ is the most unlikely to deceive. As much as this has been granted by the severest and most adverse critics of His character and influence. We offer no indignity, then, to any man, even the most wise and accomplished, when we tell him that he ought to listen to what Jesus Christ says. Any man can afford to turn away from any point in his studies of either mind or matter, that he may know "the mind of Christ." Well, it is Jesus Christ who tells us of "the living Father." He speaks as one who knows Him, and there-

fore speaks with confidence, with authority, and with a desire to guide thought. Shall we listen to Him? It seems to us we must, unless we are prepared either to insult reason, or show good cause why His words can have no meaning for us.

Here, then, the student of the universe may pause for a little in perfect security; for here, to use the expression of Coleridge, "he has come to a landing-place." Very possibly his mental journey may have been a weary and troubled one; for the discussion of laws and forces, of noumena and phenomena, of cause and effect, of mind and matter, is not always a thing that can be gone about without disappointment and fatigue. But surely if there be solid footing for the mind anywhere, it is here. The life that flows in so many streams through creation must have some exhaustless source. The many rational, moral children upon the earth must have a great living Father, from whom they have derived their life. At least we are safe enough in keeping this ground until something stronger than has yet been said threatens either to submerge it or sweep it away.

There are systems of the universe, and solutions of problems that have no existence whatever, except in the imaginations of men.

There is nothing in the world of reality that in any way corresponds to them. They are mere castles in the air. Prominent among these airy structures is the attempt to explain the existence of a creature's life without a living Creator, and a child's life without a great living Father. Jesus Christ, though not setting Himself to expose and explode such a tendency, nevertheless effectually does it. His entire story is one of life and love. That wonderful "stream of tendency" issuing from the Father's heart, and flowing by the way of Calvary, is bearing human thought and feeling outward to the everlasting ocean of truth and safety. There are eddies enough, back waters enough, obstructions and confusion enough, but the course is still onward; for all that is great in matter, great in mind, great in morals, great in religion, points in the direction of the Saviour's words when He speaks of "the living Father."

There is thus a wide circle of philosophical thought in the representation which He gives of the Father. To the physiologist and psychologist alike life is a great problem. We wander as best we can through the *Problems of Life and Mind*, but find nothing in the "physical basis," nothing in the "nervous mechanism,"

nothing in "animal automatism," or in "reflex theories," to lift the veil from the great secret of life. Herbert Spencer opens no window for us in the blank wall, when he defines life as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." It is easy enough to describe the ways in which life manifests itself. It is not so easy, however, to describe what it is, or, if God is kept out of sight, to tell us whence it comes. Scientists can tell us under what conditions crystals may be formed and eggs may be hatched, but that is not throwing much light on life. When we have built up in thought a bit of beautiful mechanism, and have given it the name of animal automatism, we are not much, if any, nearer the solution of our problem. The tendency in the meantime is to trace the whole of the phenomena of life to material causes. Even the wonderfully complex life of man is reduced to the same level. There is no need of a "living Father." There is nothing for Him to do. Particular arrangements of matter and force are quite sufficient for all the purposes of the universe. Though how the arrangement of matter and force goes on without Him is not quite clear. One would suppose that the absurdity of seeking arrangements that had

no arranger would be apparent enough ; but it is marvellous what a change in terminology can do, and how, under such names as "natural selection," "Incomprehensible Power," "Inscrutable Reality," the arranging Intelligence is assumed which is desired when we speak of a "living Father." Professor Tyndall, in discussing the theory of spontaneous generation, has said that "life does not appear without the operation of antecedent life;" and George Mivart has just said that "at present the occurrence of spontaneous generation has not been conclusively demonstrated, nor is it easy to see how it ever can be." Whatever be the bearing of such remarks upon the system of the universe which modern thought has put before the people, we are quite sure that the evolutionist has in them a hard nut to crack. Evolution implies involution. Atoms and cells cannot give what they do not possess. Thus the "living Father," as Jesus presents Him, is a real necessity of thought.

"Inscrutable Reality" is Herbert Spencer's substitute for the Personal living Father of whom Jesus Christ speaks. Is the substitute an advantage to us? Does it widen in any way, or make more clear our sphere of thought? Is it a higher or truer conception of what



thought demands as lying behind the phenomena of the universe? It seems as if men, though conscious of their own personality, could sacrifice the Divine personality without a pang. They would eliminate it from all literature. They write with the expressed hope, and in the most confident tone, that the day is fast dawning when the idea and its influence shall evaporate from the mind. But surely the idea of a personal Intelligence, a living Father, is an immeasurably higher conception than that of a power that is inscrutable. If we are to be held free to affirm anything of God at all, by all means do not let us degrade ourselves by selecting the lower forms of representing Him to our thought, while there are higher and truer ones within our reach. We are safe, then, while sitting at the Saviour's feet, and listening to Him while He speaks of a personal, living Father. For all that we can possibly mean by personality is given us in the Saviour's representation. If we had no personal Father, then we should as persons be as orphans. The jewel, however, that is thus so wonderfully set in the centre of our nature, flashes its light back upon the hand that set it there. We are the personal children of a personal Father. And though

Jesus does not emphasise this primary truth, it is because it must be assumed as the origin and cause of all human personality. Why should you prove that the sun is shining while the flowers are blooming and the birds are singing in the light he gives?

The double conception of parentage and personality carries us far up among the higher things of thought. There is more in the term father than there is in that of person. There is more in it than there is in the idea of cause. It is expressive of a relationship that is very close and strong. Our human relations—and it is quite legitimate to reason from them—help us up to a true conception of what it is. The charge of anthropomorphism must not deter us from taking advantage of all that is highest and best in our nature, in order that we may be able to think worthily of God.\* The old objection that, when we speak of parentage and

\* “Anthropomorphism in physics,” says Professor Flint, “was probably never more prevalent than at present, especially among those who denounce anthropomorphism in theology. Confidently deny free will to man, and confidently ascribe it to atoms, and you stand a good chance just now of being widely acknowledged as a great physical philosopher, and are sure at least of being honoured as an ‘advanced thinker.’ But nonsense does not cease to be nonsense when it becomes popular.”

personality we are only exaggerating our own qualities, and calling them the living Father, will have little weight upon minds that can apprehend the alternatives which they must necessarily choose. There is surely more in the idea of manhood, and all that it implies, to help us to a true conception of God than there is in the idea of "tendency," or "inscrutable reality," or the "incomprehensible power." By all means let us select terms that have the largest implications, and not allow ourselves to be the dupes of phrases that are empty of meaning. Human parentage is beyond all doubt a higher platform on which to stand and think of God, than any of the conclusions to which a materialistic science would conduct us, and from which all ideas of intelligence and heart are excluded. Hence the constant appeals which Divine teaching makes at once to our nature and relations.

When we have thought our way into the heart of the Saviour's representation of the Father, we are able to see how foolish it would be to draw the circle round any people, and confine the Divine paternity to them. He is not the Father of the Jews only, nor of the Gentiles only. He is not the Father of the good children, and not also of children who

choose to be bad. The Saviour's thought is wider than can be measured by the tape-line of any nationality or any church creed. The philosophers cannot claim Him as peculiarly their Father; nor can the rich men, nor the men of might, nor the men of culture, nor the men who walk with solemn air in temples. A man may not have said, "I believe in God, Father Almighty," but just because there is a man's heart in him he is that Father's child. He may be a bad child—that is his fault, his sin, his crime; but his nature and the Divine relation remain the same. Now, it is just here that the teachings of Jesus Christ show how strong they are to help the race. For He has something to work with, and something to work upon. There remains with man the possibility of the child-like response to the living Father's love. The simple assurance that the pulses that beat in him are fed from the "fountain of life" is enough to arrest the downward step, and cause the whole man to remount to God. And if with a single note or two the great Master can make music so rich, what melodies there will be when all the keys of a believing, loving, grateful soul are touched by all the fingers mercy wields! If men are to be lifted out of the "rank and steaming valleys of

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sense," from which our modern moralists have no power to deliver; if thought and life are to escape the cramping influence of science and philosophy, out of which all spiritual power has been emptied; if the weak and weary, instead of being driven to the wall, are to be lifted up for ever, it must be by some aspect of the truth that is wrapped up in the representation which Jesus gives of the living Father. Everywhere man must be taught to think that in that living, loving heart there is room for him; and though he may not be a man of intellectual grasp, or of strong purpose, or of rich culture, or of wide and generous impulse, or of ambition that scorns difficulties, but only a wretched thing, down at the lowest depths, and of whom even the most hopeful might be tempted to give up hope, yet the Father who has given him life has given him also love, and waits to give them in all their higher forms more abundantly.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE FATHER OF SPIRITS.

"I AM, I ought, I can, I will." Such is the way in which man, as the high-born child of the Father, is represented as being able to speak of himself. As Anselm expresses it, "The human spirit is a created image of the Divine Spirit; it can and ought to love God as the highest good." It is the way of modern thought to speak of man as a being whose whence and whither no man knows. Among a class of writers who condescend to particulars, his origin is represented as being lowly enough. As they are not exactly agreed about his nature, they can scarcely avoid being at sea about his origin. With a subtlety and inconsistency quite startling, they speak of mental, moral, and spiritual things, while the reality of mind or spirit is with the stoutest dogmatism denied. The defence set up, that "no harm can accrue so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols," might be

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innocent enough; but the reckless way in which all the terms used are made to conduct to a materialistic conclusion, only shows to what confusion all falsehood leads. For as Lange in his *History of Materialism* says, "It is one of the most important efforts of recent materialism to deduce the whole mass of voluntary movements from mechanical causes." The inconsistency in the idea of voluntary movements as the result of mechanical causes, is gulped down with an eagerness unsurpassed by the hungry beggar who swallows his morsel, wipes his mouth, and moves off. And hence it comes that, to use the language of Tyndall on another subject, "there is often a virulent contagion in a confident tone; and the hardihood of argumentative assertion is sure to influence minds swayed not by knowledge but by authority." It is not simply those who give themselves up to dissect a black beetle's nerves that become dogmatic in their denial of spirit as distinguished from body; but the contagion becomes catching among classes of men who are grateful for anything that relaxes the bonds of obligation and allows the reins to lie loose on the neck of wayward passion. For, if the distinction between mind and body is broken down, then movement will simply be mechani-

cal, and whether it be up or down, will be a matter of no moment morally so far as the individual man is concerned. Hence Huxley, as if envious of the extreme position of Moleschott, can speak of "consciousness as a function of nervous matter."\* And so, if Huxley were to be relied upon, thought, emotion, and choice are material products, just as the movements of the steam-engine, or the sound of the steam-whistle, or the shock of the electric battery. Professor Tait may well protest as he does in the following passage:—"But to say that even the very lowest form of life, not to speak of its higher forms, still less of volition and consciousness, can be fully explained on physical principles—*i.e.*, by the mere relative motions and interactions of portions of inanimate matter,

\* His words have the merit of being very plain when speaking of the intentions and hopes of science as such. "Any one," he says, "who is acquainted with the history of science will admit that its progress has, in all ages, meant, and now more than ever means, the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant gradual banishment from all regions of human thought of what we call spirit and spontaneity." But is not this a libel on the bearing and belief of the most prominent scientific men of this or any other age? Is it a fair representation of the history of science? No; surely such names as Brewster, Faraday, Forbes, Herschell, Joule, Thomson, &c., cannot be forgotten.



however refined and sublimated—is simply unscientific. There is absolutely nothing known in physical science which can lend the slightest support to such an idea. In a purely material system," he adds, "there is thus necessarily nothing of the nature of a free agent."

It is instructive to notice how J. S. Mill, after a most strenuous effort to resolve mind into a "series of sensations," is obliged to pass on from stage to stage, till it is necessary to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future. "Itself?" Yes; that is what he calls the "final inexplicability." This final inexplicability, which is aware of itself as past and future, is rather a cumbrous and roundabout way of speaking of mind; but we accept it as the expression of defeat on the part of one of the ablest of those who have tried to resolve mind into brain and nerve currents. If our only road lies along the line of physical inquiry, we may indeed speak of "fathers of our flesh," but could never speak of the "Father of spirits."

There is for us, however, a wider world of thought and fact than these narrow physical circles afford. The writer of the suggestive

words which bring our heavenly Father so near to our thought is reasoning from the less to the greater, from our earthly parentage to our heavenly parentage, from the discipline which the finite and erring fathers of our flesh may deem necessary to the discipline which the Infinite and wise Father of our spirits may think good for us; and from the disposition which we should cherish to the lower to the obedience we should render to the higher. Delitzsch, in his *Psychology*, says "there can hardly be a more classical proof text for creationism;" and yet he proceeds, because of his avowed traducianism, to divest it of this acknowledged proof-power. But, waving all controversy meantime about the Divine methods, it is enough for our purpose that the spirit has its paternity in God. These higher and lower plains of Fatherhood solve the problems of our complex nature as many of our modern speculations must ever fail to do.

We should altogether fail, however, to take with us the full meaning of this high relation, if, influenced by certain doctrines in psychology, we were to limit the words to one aspect of our conscious life, and make the word spirit refer simply to spiritual character. The contrast between fathers of our flesh and the

Father of spirits would break down under the pressure of such an exegesis. It is quite true that God is the Author of all that is high and holy in man; that it is under His influence all the higher range of human faculties rise into saintly attitudes in His presence; that under His chastening hand heart and conscience start into new life; but the writer is dealing with a truth that logically and chronologically takes precedence of that. He is dealing with the very being, the very existence of that personal spirit that can receive and become responsive to such fatherly discipline in the interests of holy culture. It is the very manhood of man he is thinking of; man as he is made in God's image. It is that which, to use Mill's words, knows itself as related to past and future, and is the basis of all the possibilities of human character. How high all this is above mere nerve centres and nerve currents, let all the attainments of the soul declare. Assuming the veracity of consciousness, we know that the spirit that can rise into moral glory or sink into moral shame, and that can embody its thoughts, its feelings, and choices in literature and art, in highly organised states and devoted missionary churches, must be something that lies behind mere nerve force.

It is easy of course to ask a great many wrong questions about spirits, and by the use of mechanical and physiological metaphors to hide from the mind all true conceptions of what spirit is as distinguished from flesh. La Place could not by searching the heavens find God. But, then, the telescope was not the fitting instrument to aid that search. Imagine the anatomist after a great deal of labour complaining that he cannot discover the mind. Through what medium does he expect the spirit to manifest itself? Confining himself strictly to his science, he has no instruments that fit him for such a discovery,—as well look for stars through a stethoscope.

“We are spirits clad in veils,  
Man by man was never seen,  
All our deep communing fails  
To remove the shadowy screen.”

The prevailing tendency to study mind by coming at it through physical organisation, is leading many into serious mistakes. Is not self-consciousness as real a thing as the brain or the backbone? Why not start, then, from that centre when we are dealing with thought, or with feeling, or with volition? Beyond doubt physiology has lamps which it may let

down into our nature, but there are depths which even its brightest lights cannot illumine. It is thus the philosophy which is given us in the word spirit vindicates itself against all materialistic tendencies, and is borne out by the common consciousness of humanity, by language, by law, and by the common responsibility of the race. In its nature spirit is other and higher than flesh, and lives and moves on a loftier plain.

Such is our nature; and we know also our origin. We can tell whence we came. We are not simply the products of a playful creative power, but the children of a wise love. We can speak of our Father. Evolutionists may affect to laugh at us when we speak of our high origin; but even out of their very laughter we extract a justification of our high claim. For when we have read all that Darwin can say about laughter, and all that Herbert Spencer can say about "an efflux through the motor nerves to various classes of the muscles," and all that Professor Bain has said about the physical and mental causes of laughter, we still find that even over that subject darkness reigns till we have lifted it into the light of the joy and gladness which the Father of spirits confers upon His child man. Thus it is that coming

from Him we bear His image. He is more to us than our Maker. A maker may be wise, mighty, and benevolent, and yet not be a father. That which he originates may be no child. A man may be a maker, and the products of his power and skill may be a poem, a statue, a picture. It may be a machine ingeniously contrived, and of great practical value; but a child is another thing. And so God may make worlds and systems, group systems, sun systems, cluster systems, nebulae systems, ulterior systems, and an ultimate system, and yet not be a Father. There might be a central heaven, and yet no circles of living loving children there. The Maker might not be able to see in that which He made anything that could intentionally reflect His thought, reciprocate His feeling, or imitate His acts. Nothing that appears in books, in lectures, or in any aspect of popular teaching, must be allowed to make us overlook the fact that we have not only a Maker, but a Father.

Surely, then, the noblest of all human occupations is to keep ourselves in "subjection" to One who occupies so lofty and yet so close a relation to us all. There is nothing higher for childhood than that. Our loftiest duties centre there. What manner of human spirits

may we hope for when once the eye is open to this august and glorious parentage? Having intellect, affections, and will, man, as God's child, is able to show by his nature and conduct what the heavenly Father is. When the human spirit thinks truth, loves purity, and wills high and holy deed, not only is it shown that man's Father has a nature that is spiritual, but that He has a character that is glorious. The spirit of a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Dante, a Goethe, arrayed in all the beauties of possible holiness, with every element of power in willing and loving subjection to the Father, would be a mighty rebuke to a materialism that dreams of getting along without God, or soul, or immortality. Surely, then, some moral splendour may be expected to surround a child whose Father is God. Subjection to Him can never degrade. The lowliest will be the loftiest. The spirit that bends most lovingly touches the very pinnacle of glory. By the discipline he receives the nobler childhood reveals itself. The despair of the philosopher and of the moralist just now is the difficulty that is felt in securing the proper discipline for man. They cannot agree about the quantity or the quality of it, because they cannot agree about that which is to be disciplined. They

cannot fit up a proper school for man, for they cannot quite make up their minds what kind of scholar he could be or should be. But the Father of our spirits knows how to teach us to profit.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE FATHER OF ALL.

THEOLOGICAL writers regard the Fatherhood of God as having a general and a special aspect ; He is the common Father of the race, but He is peculiarly the Father of men who are "born again." There are those who question the distinction, who in fact deny the twofold relation. Nothing is easier than to exaggerate the importance to be attached to the fine distinctions that men draw, or to descant on the consequences that might follow by lessening their value. The mind can easily become dramatic as it pictures the results of any departure from its own point of view. It takes alarm at any effort to modify its conclusions, and marshals its forces for defence and attack as if the foundations of the universe were about to be disturbed. Becoming suspicious, it becomes irritable, and regards every phase of opposition as a conspiracy against truth. It is forgotten that finite minds require

to look from every angle of thought, in order to catch the full glory that is in the Father's relations to men. It is, however, with the wider relation we have at present to concern ourselves, namely, the common paternity of God.

There is a touch of true genius—for we may not forget that the Bible has a human as well as a Divine side—in the quotation which Paul makes from Aratus, and which so aptly expresses the common Fatherhood—"We are also His offspring." Paul was not likely to endorse a falsehood, or make an improper use of any truth. When he echoes the voice which comes upon him from amid the poetry of Greece, it is because he knows the sentiment to be as true as it is lofty. This bit of poetry was pertinent to the business he had on hand, and he was scarcely the man to blunt the edge of his argument by making a false use of his quotation. The poet puts a torch into Paul's hand, and Paul flashes it back upon the darkness which yet remained where that torch had been kindled. He borrows and bends this ray of genius, so as to make it pierce the clouds that enwrapped the souls he longed to bless.

A poet's vision can sometimes pierce to the centre of a subject which is simply bewildering

to the scientist and the philosopher. Living in a world of high thought, he can find his way inward to the centre from any point in the circle. To him the centre must always be glorious. The child-feeling, so essential to and characteristic of the poet, cries for a Father. The high life within him mounts to the high source whence it came, and rejoices in its origin. The poetic nature cannot well be false to itself. The natural theology of true poetry will always bear witness to the Father. The higher song is always fragrant of the higher parentage. In the face of the new science of man, set forth with such an array of apparent induction of facts, with such logical pretensions, with such charm of culture, and with such hopefulness of ultimate triumph, this utterance of man's deeper nature and loftier origin given by the poetic soul has a rare value. The poet's intuitions are so much stronger and truer. The fire that burns upon the altar is so much more pure. The "landing-place," after every wide and even wild excursion, is so much more safe. For in a cold materialism, in a universe without a Father, there is neither food nor fire for a poet. Hence the Father finds for Himself a witness in the songful nature. Even when the song-robcs trail and soil themselves

in the dust of earth, the poet will now and again stand erect, and fling from the strings of his harp the notes that confess how far from the Father he had wandered away. So that, even amid the heathen nations, it seems as if the sentiments written for Israel were true,—“And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed.”

Thus it is that the Father of us all makes Himself known to every open eye. The larger the eye, the greater will be the circle of the fatherly relations and love which that eye will inclose. The calmer, too, will the heart be amid the storms of thought that would conceal Him from the view. Should men, busy with the chain of physical causation, busy with the wheels of a vast material machine, busy with the mystery and the marvels of some inexplicable force, ask us, as they of old asked the Saviour in contempt, “Where is thy Father?” we shall feel that the foundations of faith are not to be disturbed by even the spirit or the form of such a question. There is no uncertainty about the higher parentage of us all. Neither fiction nor fortune can play tricks

with us on that matter. Nor can the blush ever crimson the cheek at the mention of our common Father's name. Reproach shall never break our heart when men remind us of our parentage. This voice of song coming up from the conscious life of men outside the circle of the higher revelations, will always be for us truer and sweeter than the discordant sounds that would deny us the Father.

The poet's thought, while thus bearing witness to the common paternity of man, dips deep also into our common personal life. The offspring of the personal Father, we bear His image. Our life, too, is personal. The Father is not like unto gold, or silver, or stone; neither are His offspring. Men are not simply the material products of material forces. The tree may be stately, but it is not the Father's child; the rainbow may be beautiful, but it is not the Father's offspring; the mountain stream, whose ripple and quiet song among the solitudes rises into a roar as it plunges in the foaming waterfall, may be full of force, but it has no personal life, and has not the Father's image. Any science of man must be baseless that is built on the denial of human personality. The tree, the rainbow, the waterfall, the soaring eagle, and the creeping beetle, are indeed full

of wonders, but they are not the personal offspring of the personal Father. It is only in figure that anything less than a person is called a child. The author will sometimes, with a little pride and fondness, call his first book his firstborn, the child of his brain and heart; but he is borrowing, and is speaking in figure. But the poet, when he sings of being "also His offspring," sees the parent's features in the child's face. As Vinet would express it, "The image reveals the original, the shade denotes the object, the impression refers to the die." It is thus a true childhood the poet speaks of. Apehood, or any other hood on that level of things, has no place in his thought.

That we should think worthily of God was only a fair inference for Paul to draw from the poet's admission. That which is true in thought is meant to lead to that which is right in conduct. Our high relationship has in it the possibilities of high moral results. We are the offspring of the Father's love that we may imitate the Father's life. And hence much more is demanded of us than is, or can be, demanded of creatures that have no such relationship and no such power. As we ought not to think of the Father unworthily, so

neither ought we, in worship or otherwise, to act unworthily. We are thus responsible for the thoughts we think and the deeds we do in relation to the Father.

When Professor Tyndall said in his Birmingham address that criminals commit crime because they cannot help it, and that we punish them for it because we cannot help it, he was simply caricaturing at once human life and human law. He was making character an impossibility. He was annihilating the human will, wiping out the human conscience, destroying moral obligation, and reducing human nature to a piece of animated mechanism. When Dr. Farrar, referring to the twelve hundred criminals near to Westminster where he was preaching, said that "among them are some who have got within the arm of the law, but are hardly criminal at all, and these might be liberated; others there are who have fallen into crime only from surrounding temptations, and from natures weak but not depraved," he may have said what is true enough. For men are selfish, and their inhumanity can make "countless numbers mourn;" but that can never break down the personal life, nor lift the pressure of responsibility from the soul. It may modify it, as it doubtless does; but it

never can destroy it, nor reduce life to a series of physical antecedents and consequents. When it is said that "a bishop and a St. Bernard mastiff are moral agents, their conduct being determined by considerations indissolubly, though it may be sub-consciously, associated with pain and pleasure," we get a glimpse of the way in which men passing for philosophers fail to see the possibilities and obligations of the Father's offspring. For, in the first place, the St. Bernard mastiff is not a moral agent at all, and cannot therefore be placed beside a bishop as a responsible being. In the second place, a bishop determines his own conduct, pleasure and pain not being the determining causes at all. And, in the third place, pleasure and pain are not the only considerations, whether sub-consciously or not, that a bishop has in view when he determines his conduct. There is such a thing as the idea of the right, and of the true also, and of the good, which a bishop as a child of the Father may be expected to think of and attend to, even if it should bring pain, and which he as a moral being does attend to without considering the question of pain or pleasure in any way. The Apostle Paul when he saw duty, conferred not with flesh and blood for a



moment. He put aside all the scales and weights which philosophers would put into the hands of men, and refused, being a child of the Father, to have his conscience injured and his heart chilled by the cold calculations of mere profit and loss to feeling. Out of the high relationship comes a sense of the conduct that is becoming in the child.

The sentiment which the apostle thus borrows shows us how much wider a thing the Divine offspring is than our narrow theology, our patriotism even, and sometimes our philanthropy also, would represent it to be. Speaking in the name of the nations that had not the "covenants," nor the "glory," nor the "giving of the law," nor the "service," nor the "promises," nor the "fathers," he claims to be, with more favoured peoples, none the less belonging to the family. His word is a precious testimony to a precious truth. We owe much to the Greek. His language, his poetry, his art and philosophy, make us his debtors through all time; but the utterance of this lofty sentiment enhances the whole a thousand-fold. It shows us what a wonderful down-shining of Divine light there is upon the heights of thought when the soul is working in its truer and higher moods. The poet's

clear, strong vision gazes into the very centre of human nature and its lofty relations. Man everywhere is God's child. He may not have been a loving child, an obedient child, a child in whose conduct the Father could take delight, but he is a child still. He is indeed a creature, but he is more. He is a subject, but he is more. He is a servant, but he is more. He is a child. Here, then, there is something on which to bring all the appliances of infinite love and mercy. Here there is something on which to build up a noble manhood, all whose higher developments shall glorify the Father who is in heaven.

And since the religion of Jesus Christ is the highest expression of this universal Fatherhood, we see how thoroughly adapted it is to be a religion for humanity. There is nothing merely national, local, or sectarian about it. Every human heart may feel that it lies in the Divine heart, loved and loving. God is not only the centre and source of all minds, but that great well of patient love whose living waters every man may drink. And so there are no political or social heights that are not reached, and touched, and transfigured by the glory of this idea of the Divine paternity. It leaves its lines of beauty in the darkest haunts

of men. Thus the moving spring of religious life will be love, not fear, not custom, not self-interest, not mere imitation, but love, the love of the child responding to a Father's love. That is what it would have been if the child had never wandered; that is what it becomes when, by the propitiation of Jesus, the child comes back to the Father, forgiven, his every sin forgotten for ever. And so the higher child-life is reached, not through philosophical systems, not through political institutions, not through social movements, important soever as they may be, but by the love of the Father shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to men. Influenced by that love, drawn by it as with the cords of a man, the heart feels the true child-love springing up to a Father from whose wish and will it ought never to have wandered. Thus it rises up to worship the Father. Such worship is not confined to particular places, or times, or modes. The words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria are thus felt to be real by such a heart: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." It is significant to find Renan calling this "the sentence on which will repose the edifice of eternal religion. He

founded the pure worship of all ages, of all lands, that which all elevated souls will practise until the end of time." Such a saying, however, J. S. Mill would have regarded as "poor stuff," and so could not have been very elevated in spirit. So strange and contradictory are the spheres in which the sceptical mind lives. Having Jesus for our teacher, however, we can very easily afford to put other masters aside.

And this idea of a wide and high childhood will give us a true basis for what is sadly wanted in these days, namely, a nobler brotherhood, with its privileges and duties. To one seeing through that Greek poet's eyes, the circle of the family will not only be large, but the brotherhood real. A poet is peculiarly a brotherly man. He may have his faults, his weaknesses, his sins, but the heart within him pants for a wider and wiser manifestation of real brotherhood. He bases duty not on any narrow gospel of mere patriotism, not on any policy of self-interest, not on the use we can make of those over whom we have influence, but deep down in the brotherly nature. Hence moral distinctions will not take the form of clever calculations. The clear head will see that other members of the family have their rights which warm hearts will not trifle with.

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The Father of light, shining in upon every soul, will make the lines of duty as well as of privilege plain. Lifted into such light, a man's duty to his brother will not be a question of how much he is able to get out of his brother's bones or brains that he can turn to his own gratification. He will measure life by a much higher standard than that. Oh how significant would be the flag that waves over every fatherland, if men, the world over, would intelligently look up to the Father, then round on the family, and say, "We are also His offspring."

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## CHAPTER V.

## OUR FATHER.

"ULYSSES knew that no human creature is an orphan; but there is a Father who always and without intermission takes care of all." Such is an echo of the voices which come in upon us, as it were, over the wall that incloses the garden of the Lord. There are many such voices; and though they fall with broken utterances upon the ear, they are not altogether unintelligible on that account. Here, however, the voice is rich and round, and leaving little to be supplied. Men are not orphans, but the children of their Father who is in heaven, and whose arms encircle them all.

"I am saying a little prayer in my heart," said a poor man to me one day in the Infirmary, as I stood by his bedside. "Well," I said, "and what do you pray?" "I say the 'Our Father,'" was his reply. Childhood's memories seemed to come up and warm that poor old heart as he lay in the ward among

his sick companions. Like many more of childhood's simple rhymes, said o'er a thousand times, this one, simple and yet profound, easy and yet difficult, comes upon us in our darkness and sorrow, not only recalling the lights that burned on the home-hearth so long ago, but lifting the heart to Him who never yet turned a weary, sorrowing child away. The memories so sweet and holy that gather round these words throughout Christendom, enshrine them in every heart the cords of which have ever felt their mystic touch.

With that power of compression which was only His, Jesus has gathered up the instincts, the duties, and the privileges of men as He presents them in this form of words. As Dr. Morison puts it, "The Lord's Prayer is thus a *manner* and *model* of prayer;" "for in this particular," as Tertullian remarks, "it was needful that new wine should be laid up in new skins." Its brevity and simplicity, its comprehensiveness and depth; that humanity and tenderness that make, as with a touch of nature, the whole world kin, fits it at once for old and young. What a vision of little folded hands, and little bended knees, and little simple acts of devotion performed at a mother's knee, or at the bedside, morning and evening, comes

upon the Christian mind as it tries to read the history of these words since Jesus uttered them. The repetition of them in the great congregation, were it only not just so formal, so hurried, and so cold, would be not only the expression of dependence upon the Father, but of that brotherhood in whose presence strife, and war, and selfishness could not live. As it is, who can tell what undercurrents of kindly feeling have been made to flow by the very fact that rich and poor men, learned and ignorant men, healthy and sickly men, have sat or stood side by side and said, "Our Father."

Like every great word or deed, this simplicity, so attractive and so adapted to all measures of power, has behind it an immense background of meaning which taxes at once the intellect and heart of man. To gather with a wide embrace a large sheaf of the golden stalks that spring from this single seed-thought, it is necessary that a man be both humble and strong. For only think what endless lines of thought start from the one word "Father." An idol is nothing, however big it be. Pile world on world, and system on system, till science, weary with its work, falls down and adores, the thing it worships will be



an idol still. Nature is to the soul an empty mansion till thought has reached the Father. Our own spiritual nature calls for Him. Our childhood implies paternity. Our dependence speaks to us of the independent. Our subjection points to sovereignty. All that is great within us points to the greatest. All that is good within us points to the best. "No one is so much alone in the universe as a denier of God," says Richter. "With an orphaned heart, which has lost the greatest of fathers, he stands mourning by the immeasurable corpse of nature, no longer moved or sustained by the Spirit of the universe, but groaning in its grave; and he mourns until he himself crumbles away from the dead body." Frightening himself by his own dream, in which he makes Jesus say with streaming eyes, "We are all orphans, I and you; we are without a Father," his soul, like a true poet as he was, recoils from empty immensity, "frozen dumb Nothingness, cold eternal Necessity, insane Chance." From the heights, as well as from the depths, the soul cries for the Father. What would many a heathen have given, as he sought expression for those irrepressible feelings which well up from human nature, just to have heard the Great

Teacher speak in this way of the Father. What glory would have fringed the clouds that lowered upon him, and which, like messengers of vengeance, seemed charged with messages of wrath. The Father, whose personal, moral, and progressive children we are, and who has lavished His choice gifts so liberally upon us;—what would not many a weary soul, sighing through his poetry, or feeling after Him in his dreams, have given just to know Him as we know Him, or may know Him. It is not the Almighty Artisan constructing a marvellous bit of mechanism. It is not the All-wise Artist touching into beauty the temple that is built. It is not the irresponsible Tyrant whose caprices trembling slaves obey. It is the Father of whom Jesus speaks. All that is true and tender, more than all that child has ever enjoyed because of that relationship, is mirrored in the word. He is God. He is King. He is Judge. He is everything that is great and good, but He is Father. He is Creator. He is Preserver. He is holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, but He is Father. He is not the "Unknown;" He is the Father. He is not the "Unthinkable;" He is the Father. True, you cannot see Him through the microscope, nor through the

telescope; but neither can you see thought, nor love, nor joy, nor purity, nor any one of the immense range of spiritualities with which the mind is perfectly familiar, through these material instruments. If it were a picture or a poem, or a mountain or a molecule, material instruments might aid you. If it were a nettle or a nerve centre that was the subject in dispute, glasses that aid the eye would be of value; but the affairs of the spirit have to be seen by spirit. The vision of the soul goes farther than the stars, and sees the Father.

Thus it is that behind the very simplicities of the expression there stretch out fields over which the mind, as it wanders, may well weary itself, but where wealth may be found that enriches forever. The infant lisps the name, but the man of grey hairs has not exhausted its meaning. Taking the name with us, we have a key that will ultimately unlock every difficulty that opposes thought. To pronounce the name as the soul may and ought to pronounce it, is to see heaven itself opened.

But simple as we have seen the words to be, new lines of thought start out before us as we linger on the initial word "Our"—"*Our* Father." We have gone into the centre and have been looking up; we still stand at the

centre and look around. The words are full of brotherhood as they are of fatherhood. There are many and great circles in that word "Our." The child's soul, as he folds his little hands in the midst of little brothers and sisters, runs round one circle. The two or three met in the name of Christ send their thoughts round another. The larger congregation, touched with a sense of the wider kinship, make the word inclose a larger space. The annual meeting, congress, conference, or assembly, with currents of grateful feeling flowing into, or out of, or around the representative gathering, speaks to us of a larger circle still. Different nationalities finding a voice in connection with some religious alliance or special gathering of the good, carry us outward more and more. And yet the circles widen. For, since we are "all His offspring," any man stepping out as representing the race may gather up all human relations, possibilities, and wants, and say "*Our*" Father.

But is it not often as with stammering tongue men pronounce the word "our"? "How could I write songs of hatred without hating?" The words are Goethe's, and turn, as it were, a great bull's-eye upon the dark places of the heart. For how, we ask, can a man pray

prayers of love without loving? How can his "our" take in the race if he does not love the race? Can he pray for the nation, the city, the society in which he moves, the church he attends, the family in which he lives, if he does not love? Can he thrust his hands into the fires of hate and ill-will, and draw out from them the deadly weapon that is being forged, and then kneel down and pray for the terrible Vulcan who feeds and fans the fires, if he does not love with a love that surmounts all wrong? One requires to understand and appreciate the Fatherhood, in order that all that the brotherhood means may have full play upon the heart.

It is in this way, then, that the eternal thought is moving on to the accomplishment of its own vast design. It is leading men to a true conception of brotherhood by giving them the true meaning of Fatherhood. It is destroying selfishness by kindling on the heart a great fire of love. The ashes of old evil are to "feed the future's golden grain." The mystic finger writes the doom of all exclusiveness by writing in large letters the love of God. Patriotism, which in many forms is apt to be narrow enough, is to widen with the circle of the globe. Fraternity is to be no longer a fool's

watchword. The aspirations of the poets, so often heaved as from sad sick hearts, for the good time coming, when "the parliament of man, the federation of the world" shall be realised, lifted by Christ into the light of the Fatherhood, are seen to be not only possibilities, but promises that are hastening toward fulfilment. How the world would be bathed in glory if all men everywhere knelt and said, "Our Father!"

## CHAPTER VI.

## DESIRE FOR THE FATHER.

A MAN'S desires are many. They are sometimes very strong. Their range is very wide, and their demands imperious. A glance at any system of psychology that deals in a competent way with the sensibilities as distinguished from thoughts and volitions, will suggest how wide the field is over which our feelings wander.

Is there any great and true want of the human heart that has not been anticipated and provided for? We are sure there is not. Yet to have that want brought clearly into consciousness, to have it gathered up and intelligently expressed in words, marks a stage in the progress of the inner life that rewards study. It is surely an important thing for a man to know what his greatest wants are, and how they can be met. To listen to the voices that are coming up daily from the deep of his nature, is at least one way in which he may

increase his knowledge of what he is and what he needs. Clearly to understand any one of those voices, and accurately to report it, lifts the whole man into a higher sphere, where the whole nature is bathed in a higher light.

The idea of the Father had been presented by the Saviour so frequently, with such a fulness, with such a tenderness of tone, that as by stroke after stroke the depths of Philip's nature were being broken up by it. His demand is a loud explosion of feeling. It comes up from a heaving heart. It is like a groan. It is not a mere ripple on the surface of a curious, speculative intellect, bold enough, it may be, to rush with sandled feet into the presence of mysteries that might consume. His demand is deeper than that. The process of education through which the Saviour had been putting him would have been a failure if only a speculative habit had been the result. But the Saviour knew what He was doing, and what, as the result of patient persevering presentation of the idea of the Father, Philip, as the spokesman of the others, would be drawn out to say. Hearts have often to be dealt with as nature deals with the rocks which she prepares as soil for the dwellers in the valleys below; she has to apply fire, then



frost, and, by sundry methods of handling, break them up and pulverise them, that the seed may ultimately find a place in which to rest, and food by which to grow. It was so that these men's hearts were being prepared for the final words that were to complete their mental fitness for the new order of things which Jesus came to establish.

Was it with the eye or with the understanding that Philip wanted to see the Father? How should we be able to answer that question? Possibly, Philip would not, at that moment, have been able to answer it himself. We can imagine him as being startled even by the sound of his own words. It was a great demand, made, as we see, without thought as to the methods in which it might be met. It was too real, however, and too urgent to be trifled with, and hence Jesus calmly and kindly answers it. What could any answer short of the Saviour's have done for a heart so expressing itself? To a heart heaving and burning with a great grief, or a great want, the influence of a shallow philosophy would be as powerless as the snowflakes that fall into the hot volcano. The cooling, quieting power would be nil.

It is clear, then, that the strong instincts

of our nature cry for "the Father." Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should write in the book of our being a record of our childhood and our need of a Father? \* Shall the needle turn to the north, shall the heliotrope follow the sun, and shall the heart of a man have no centre where it may rest in safety and peace? That would indeed be a hard morsel for the mind to digest. Men of clear thought and of deep feeling have not been able at any time to digest it. The seers and sons of song have seen the story of man's relation to the Father written, not only in every member of the body, but in every faculty of the mind, and in every want of the heart. Unclothing their thoughts of the many coloured metaphors they use, their meaning might be put exactly as Philip puts it. The torn heart through all time has, in many moods and tones, been crying for the Father. It is thus we read the writing that is in the soul. Of course, it is so much easier to read it now that the light of the Saviour's life has shone upon it. Every letter has become legible, and the fulness of meaning is more perfectly

\* Like the tidal marks found in the lowest rocks, there are records even in the stony heart of how high religious emotions may at one time have risen.

unfolded. He has interpreted our wants. He has explained our feelings to us. But nothing is altered. He has shown us that we want not simply Creator and King, but Father. And that is the common want. In all the stories of the gods which the fruitful imagination has created, in all the errant forms which the religious feeling has assumed, in all the unrest which the heart and intellect have expressed, there is, to the ear that can hear, a common cry for the Father. The heart may not always understand its own cry, even as the child, conscious of a want, cannot give it utterance; but as light is given by new thought, aspiration crystallises into conviction, and the idea of Fatherhood illumines life.

There is, of course, a philosophy that denies all this. Nescience will tell us that no such Father can be known. It must needs, of course, put something in His place, and may speak to us of fate, or force, or law, or the inscrutable, and in many other ways bind a bandage of big words about the eyes that the Father may not be seen; but there are instincts that ride at an easy and safe pace over all such barriers. As the rider, who in the darkness loses his way, will sometimes throw the reins upon the horse's neck, leaving the in-

stinct of the animal that bears him to guard him from danger, so there are moments in life when the efforts of the intellect become perplexing, and when a man's safety lies in throwing up the reins to the deepest feelings that hurry him along. It is not, of course, always a safe thing to do, just as it is not always necessary for the rider to make his horse his guide; but in matters concerning his religious nature, a man is always safe in allowing his feelings to rush with him at once into the presence of the Father.

But when the current of religious feeling sets in strongly in the direction of the Father, we see how intellectual energy is pressed into the service of that feeling. A critical age is apt to play with questions of cause, creation, and even morality and religion. Its efforts to toss about these big things with its little hands would be amusing sometimes, if one could only avoid seeing the absurdity and danger involved in the act. But when feeling becomes irrepressible, and the heart, like a strong swimmer, battles with the flood, that it may make for the shore, intellectual energy becomes earnest, honest, urgent. As the child lifts from the ground the nuts that have fallen, cleans them, and cracks them, and, finding

them empty, flings the shells in disgust away, so does the intellect fling from it in bitter disappointment the fancied prizes that various philosophers had dropped on its path. It finds them empty. The brightest of them are but broken things at best, and with the consciousness of a deep darkness within it, the intellect turns away to the Father of lights. There is now an edge on inquiry that could cut a way through a whole regiment of philosophers,—through, indeed, a solid square of philosophers that would come between it and the Father. It is a pitiable philosophy, whether dressed in the costume of centuries ago, or in the garb of modern times, which teaches that “the mind looks round for succour because it is wanted, not because it is to be had.” To say, as Edith Simcox says in her *Essay on Ethics*, that “there is no God to make the rough ways smooth,” is to say what must ever be a poor reason for writing a book or for doing anything else with which the mind is in any way concerned. It would have been a bitter sop to put into the mouth of poor Philip, tossed as his mind and heart must have been between his ignorance and his strong desire. The answer which Jesus gave him was true succour, and no man in his senses will think of appeal-

ing from Jesus to philosophers. Lecky, at least, would scarcely do so, for, speaking of His life and labours, he says,—in the simple record of three short years of active life we have what “has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists.” This testimony is true, and, as Jesus guides the mind to the Father, we see how He can succour and satisfy as well as soften and refine.

And thus we have the whole soul rounding its life by resting in the Father. It is satisfied. No one would think of blaming Philip for his strong desire to be satisfied, to be at rest, to be happy. Our modern moralists who resolve morality into happiness would especially approve it. They might not quite approve of his seeking satisfaction to mind and heart in the Father; that they might be tempted to regard as a dream, as a delusion, as a course of conduct calculated neither to lead to objective truth nor to subjective satisfaction. For in objective truth, as understood by them, there is no place for the Father; so that in subjective rest the idea could have no legitimate influence. Still, they would approve of his seeking to be satisfied, as who would not?

Even if we were to assume that the demand as put is a bold one, and having an element of ignorance mingling with it, still we must see that it touches the vital question of what it is that can satisfy the soul. If there be a goal anywhere for ethical thought, for philosophical thought, for scientific thought, for religious thought; if the human heart, with all its uttered and unuttered yearnings, may not be regarded as the mere product of material forces, which could not know what they were about, and which, as still maintaining their mastery over it, perpetuate its unrest; if to have a conscience and a heart be not the cruellest thing that could happen to a being at any stage in the process of evolution; and if to speak of man as the noblest being on the earth, be not a mere mockery and a sham, then the mind of Philip had a grasp of the most fundamental truth when he said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." It matters little whether, like Moses, he was thinking of the unseen glory of God manifesting itself to the eye, or some other special revelation which he believed Jesus could give; the central truth is the fact that, when the soul reaches the Father, it is satisfied. Its life is rounded, completed, and becomes restful. Its philosophical

tendency runs round the circles of thought, and sees them beautiful in the smile of the Father. It listens to all ethical demands, and hears in them the echo of the harmony that is in the Father's own nature. It stands in the presence of the Father's goodness and love, and adores. It is as if, over this new creation in experience, the old words were heard anew, "Let there be light." Verily there is endless satisfaction for the soul that thus sees the Father. The feeling of orphanhood can no longer oppress the heart.

How, then, could Philip, or any other man, see the Father? Only by intelligently looking upon Christ. That is the answer. Jesus is the revealer of the Father. The Christ, not of the imagination but of history, is God made manifest. That character in which all the glories of the Father concentrate and are reflected upon the world, is not an ideal creation, but an historical reality. Men could see it with the eyes, could apprehend it with the mind, could feel it with the heart. It was clothed in flesh; for how otherwise could man bear to look upon it? All the life, the love, the pity, and the tenderness of the Father find expression in the personality and deeds of Jesus. Genius working at red heat may now



and again startle the world by the glory of its creations; but for breadth, and power, and wonderful results, it has never given form to anything like the fatherly character which Jesus reveals. In His mastery of matter and of mind, in the unveilings of truth and purity, in the matchless openings into love and life, we see the personal Father of men. Beyond doubt the answer which Jesus gives touches mysteries, the depth of which no man knows. But we can see the fact, though it is not necessary that we should be able to fathom it. It is not with the metaphysics of the question we have to do. The brightness of the Father's glory is before us when our minds are face to face with Jesus. Philip needed no Shechinah for his physical vision, no new gift of mental vision. The image of the Father was before him while he was looking upon the Saviour. The glories of the universe are focalised in Christ. If any man cares to deny that it is so, it is difficult to know how any one could show him the Father. If a man could call a rainbow ugly, would it not be necessary for some oculist to examine his eyes, or some phrenologist to finger his head, or some pathologist to make a careful diagnosis of the disease or diseases under which he labours? In the

same way, if a man should treat this saying of Jesus other than the most glorious and attractive truth, would it not be necessary to inquire whether there were anything in that man's nature for the magnetism of truth to act upon? That man is surely walking in a vain show, and playing with delusions, who can shut out from his mind Jesus Christ as the manifested Father, and give himself up to phantom ideals which, when tested by philosophy and fact, are seen to vanish away, and thus mock the eyes that stand gazing after them.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SON REVEALING THE FATHER.

"A BETTER Instructor," says Lessing, "must come and tear the exhausted Primer from the child's hands. Christ came." This is progress. Many lines running inward converge at this point, and show that the greatness of the Father and the littleness of the child must be no barrier to free communication and fellowship. The gulf is bridged. The glory is softened through the medium of humanity, so that the weak eye is not injured. "God, who at sundry times and divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last times spoken unto us by His Son." Is His speech final? Or is there a richer, fuller, brighter word yet to be uttered by any one? By whom could it be spoken? When poetry and art, and science and philosophy, and politics and trade, have reached their zenith, and done their best to brighten earth, will not God be in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself? And will not the voice that came

from heaven in the past come to man in the future, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him?" "Go thine inscrutable way, Eternal Providence," says Lessing, "only let not me despair in Thee because of this inscrutableness. Let me not despair in Thee, even if Thy steps appear to me to be going back. It is not true that the shortest line is always straight. Thou hast on Thine eternal way so much to carry on together, so much to do, so many side steps to take! And what if it were as good as proved that the vast slow wheel, which brings mankind nearer to this perfection, is only put in motion by smaller, swifter wheels, each of which contributes its own individual unit thereto?" Some of the wheels were put in motion by which great results were to follow when Jesus, with His eye upon the Father's ways, said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." What to other eyes would have been inscrutable was to the Saviour very clear; and hence, as He saw the "babes" illumined, while darkness still rested on the "wise and prudent," He could say, "I thank Thee, O Father."

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But why this wonderful swell of motion? Could we only put ourselves at the centre of the Saviour's consciousness, what a wonderful circle of interests that "I thank thee" would be seen to inclose. It rises like a towering protest above the fogs and clouds that enwrapped the "knowing ones," who were in their own eyes too wideawake to take advantage of any wisdom He could impart; and sublimely acquiesces in the way the Father deals with these men. It is no pettish freak of ill-feeling towards them. It is no mere volley of small arms over a questionable victory. It is no pleasure in the fate they invoke; but it is a high exultation in the fact that, though they in their wisdom despise the Gospel, simpler men accept it. The smaller wheels will still move and work towards grand results. Thus thought and feeling and volition flow concurrently with the Father's, as Jesus says "I thank thee." It is common for great ones to embrace at what they call a supreme moment. Here the heart of Jesus touches the Father's heart. We who look on cannot contemplate it without emotion. We too will have a "thank thee," if we are able to have even a glimpse of what Jesus saw.

To speak of a "withholding grace, without

which *these things* are invisible," as the explanation of the conduct of the "wise and prudent," and of the fate that befalls them, would be to make the Saviour's cup of joy a bitter thing to drink. To "reveal" implies more things than one or two; it certainly implies that there is not only something to reveal, but some one to reveal it to. There must be capacity to receive; and not capacity only, but a willingness to take what may be given. But if men refuse to accept, if they refuse to open the eyes, if they refuse to unstop the ear, can there be any wonder that the diviner music, the diviner beauty, the diviner gifts can never be theirs? We are sure that the Father, whose compassions flow to all His children, could not withhold from any one what is necessary to safety and peace; but we are just as sure that if men refuse to receive them, they never can enjoy them. And we too, when we think correctly, can acquiesce in such a case and say, "I thank thee." What the Father does is right, and therefore always the best.

Such are the circumstances in which Jesus was placed when He spoke of Himself as revealing the Father. He was not standing in any temple of science which men have built.

It was not even in the temple of nature He said "I thank thee." He is standing amid the spiritual wonders which His own great Gospel works. To speak of Himself as the Revealer of the Father to men, is to take our thought into the very innermost circle of revelation. Let us say frankly that there is mystery enough here. There are metaphysical depths which our finite line may not fathom. Still we can understand how neither nature, nor providence, nor society, nor any human book, can reveal the Father as the sinful soul needs to have Him revealed. He must be revealed in a person, but not in a finite person. Could a creature give us the fulness of the Father? Only the Son can make Him known. Hence science and philosophy must sit at the Saviour's feet. Only at His fountain can they fill their cup. For when they have said their last word, Jesus has something more to say. Spirit, God, Father, Love, Pardon,—these are a long way above the heights on which science and philosophy are tempted to sit down. And unless they rise and gird themselves about, openly planting their feet in the Saviour's footsteps, doffing their robes, laying down their sceptres, and veiling their faces in that Presence that Jesus reveals, they can never utter the last

possible word with "I thank thee." As the lower lights of life, we rejoice that they burn; but unless the human path is to be blocked up as with a blank wall, we need the *Lux Mundi*,—the Light of the World. As one might lift the corner of the curtain that veils some noble work of art, so as just to see a portion of the picture, nature, science, and the human soul give us a partial revelation of the Father. They cannot give us all. I have read *Hamlet*, but have I seen therein all the possibilities of Shakespeare's soul? I have seen at Antwerp Reuben's "Descent from the Cross," but have I thereby seen the utmost play of the artist's power? I have looked upon the Matterhorn, and heard the noise of Niagara, but have I seen in the snow of the one the purity of the Father, or heard in the other the full thunder of His power? Plato's *Republic* is behind me on the shelf, but while he tells me that "there is no place in God for the poet's falsehood," he does not tell me of the Father as I need to be told. Only the Son can reveal Him.

But the Son, while He reveals the Father, does not veil or conceal the King. Hence the exalted language which He uses, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." The heaven and earth are not independent.



They are not supreme. They are under the rule of a wise mind, a warm heart, and a mighty will. The government is personal, parental, but kingly. The sceptre is in the hand of a sovereign Father. The forces of heaven are under His control, while the nations of the earth, though they know it not, are but men. This aspect of the Divine nature and rule which the Saviour gives us, shows what tricks the scientific imagination is playing with the idea of physical force. The necessities of thought demand that there should be some lordship of the heavens and the earth; but instead of seeking and finding that lordship in a living personal Lord, science dreams of finding it in cold impersonal law. The prophets of the old time are more philosophical, more scientific, when, speaking of this universal lordship, they say, "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." Hence whatever force opposes this supreme rule only wastes itself in vain. It can never reach any useful or laud-

able result. Even the efforts of men in these modern times to place force or law upon the throne of the universe is only wasted strength. The Almighty

“Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,  
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds,”

is not going to abdicate because of the tumult which a few books or lectures create. He did not lay aside the lordship of the heavens and the earth because the “wise and prudent” chose to refuse the message of mercy which He sent them. There is no panic in the skies because men propose peculiar tests of His power over, or interest in, the affairs of men. “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.”

But this aspect of the Divine lordship shows as well what an unsafe thing it is to be led away by mere sentimentalism when thinking of the Divine relation to men. Beyond doubt the Divine sensibility is an encouraging, indeed an inspiring, thing to think about; but it would be a fatal mistake to suppose that it is too refined to smite, too refined to visit with punishment; too refined, finally, to hide from

the eyes of men the things they have so long despised. The Divine nature is harmonious, and its harmony demands an everlasting opposition to whatever is false and unbecoming in man. It is no compliment to any parent to say he cannot punish. We may be quite sure of this, that the Lord of heaven and earth is not likely to suffer dictation at the hands of any class of men however "wise and prudent" they may deem themselves.

Now, for this harmonious view of the Father's character and relations we have to go to Jesus; for He alone knows the Father; He alone can make Him known to men. It is quite possible for speculation to make rather free with the metaphysics of the Son's relation to the Father; but all temptation in that direction must, at least in the meantime, be resisted. It is possible also for curiosity to concern itself unprofitably with the metaphysics of the Son's relations to men. But Christ's words have not been spoken in the interests of speculation or curiosity, if there be such interests; but He has spoken for that which is to us the most momentous practical matter—namely, that we, receiving His message, may know that we have a loving, forgiving Father, who is also Lord of heaven

and earth. To receive this message, and thus to know the Father, is to have life eternal. Thus does Jesus share with us the knowledge which He has of the heavenly Father.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE SON SENT BY THE FATHER.

THE coming of Jesus Christ into the world is the central fact in the world's history, and is, therefore, of paramount interest to all men. What did He come to do? What did He come to do that could not be done by others? And why especially should it be said that the Father sent Him?

Every theory of atonement takes for granted the necessity for some remedial measures by which the world may be saved. Whatever be the word-moulds in which the thought is run, some measure of deliverance is implied. A true doctrine of Fatherhood does not ignore the existence of moral disapprobation and judicial displeasure when the child-man has rebelled, and the spirit of rebellion is cherished. How then shall man be delivered from the retributive consequences of his rebellion? It cannot follow, because God is a Father, that He will on that account look with indulgence or with

indifference on either the sin or the sinner. In any theory of atonement it is necessary to keep a firm grasp of the fact and nature of sin, and of its bearings upon the individual, and upon society as a whole. We have seen how thoroughly all the false theories of man's nature, origin, and relations, fail to break down the idea of his responsibility. Deeply rooted in his very nature are elements that demand some honourable ground of acceptance with the Father. With systems outside the idea of atonement, such as "culture," "morality without religion," and all anti-christian theories, we have nothing specially here to do. What chiefly concerns us is the fact, that any theory of atonement which will meet the necessities of thought must supply an objective ground on which the Father and His rebel child can honourably meet and be reconciled. The rebel child needs pardon; can the Father justly and wisely grant it? The polluted child needs purification; does the ground on which he stands for the reception of pardon also supply the moral power that purifies? Sin has degraded him; may he again, even in the Father's presence, lift up his head? We know what complications have characterised the warfare that has gathered

round these questions ; but we cannot review them at length just now.

The world, then, needs to be saved. All history is but the utterance of that need. Every page is a record of the world's sin, disturbance, and danger. Our poetry, our fiction, our drama, bloody wars and crashing dynasties, are but a great cry of danger and need of being saved. Our press is a mirror of the world's woes. Optimist and pessimist alike have to face the fact that the world is somehow "out of joint." It is possible, indeed, that men with a peculiar kind of mental kaleidoscope may be able, by little bits of bright glass gathered from the happier regions of social and national life, to turn round pictures that fascinate the mind and lessen for the moment the impression of the world's misery. But the anguish, and the sorrow, and the cry for help are there notwithstanding. The unhallowed fires which sin has kindled burn fiercely night and day ; and many a precious treasure, many a cherished hope disappears amid the flames. It is poor consolation to be told by the philosophers of the day that these are but the world's growing pains, or the pangs of the brighter birth-time, or the commotion incidental to the development of true progress.

To see humanity writhing amid the convolutions of many serpent-like evils, and to know that by their poison and their force parents and children go down in weakness and despair; to see from amid the common wreck here and there a brave swimmer striking for the shore, yet, caught with cramp, or overcome with weakness, going down when almost within reach of the land, is certainly a poor prospect of a very speedy progress for the race. John was right when he spoke of the world requiring a Saviour. Its weakness cries for the aid of a strong arm. Its sins and sorrows call for one mighty to save.

But what and how much is implied in this idea of being saved? If we take with us an adequate idea of the situation, we may be quite certain that the forgiveness of sin is the first and most urgent element in safety. It is quite true that there are currents of theological thought running strongly just now against this position; but many a strong current and heavy sea will break before a rock is removed. Pardon is the first thing a sinful man requires; other things will follow in due time and in their due order; whole troops of higher blessings will enter when the reception of pardon throws open the gates. But is this pardon a



possibility? Is it, in the experience of any man, a fact? Has God ever at any time forgiven sin? It may appear startling that such questions should be asked, but there are theories of salvation that make it necessary that we ask them. It is said, for example, that "the very lowest, the weakest, and the least noble thing we can do, is to beg for escape from the proper desert of evil." What, then, are we to do? Bear the punishment? Does Jesus Christ wish us to do that? If so, why did He become a Saviour? To escape the "proper desert of evil" may not be the only, or even the highest, thing at which a man who needs salvation should aim; but it may be the first thing, inasmuch as it may be the necessary means to the desired ends. When it is said that "pardon is not salvation; not at all," there is a positiveness about the assertion which is not warranted by the measure of information it indicates. When, again, it is asserted that "a true salvation is not escape from the consequences of sin present or remote," we have the same dogmatism with the same narrow vision. If the "one salvation which there is for man, is a salvation not from hell, but from sin," when and how, we ask, is that salvation secured? Are the records of Christian experience records

of a sinless life? If not, then there can be no such thing as salvation enjoyed on the earth. Men forget, in their anxiety to work out a theory, that the mightiest impulse which the soul can get on the line of purity, is the knowledge that in wisdom and righteousness the past has been pardoned.\*

But is this pardon of the past a fact in the experience of men? There are writers on theology who say no; and for two reasons they think; the first being the assertion that "the righteous verdict of Heaven against all moral evil is, in every instance, carried out inexorably;" the second being found in the idea that "justification is a real inward, entire change." There is no pardon, it is said; for the "ordained penalty is always inflicted on sin," for eternal justice takes its course resistlessly, punishing sin to "the veriest jot and tittle." If this were a correct statement of things as they are, then there can be no pardon; but that would blot out half of the Bible. He "in whom we have redemption

\* How falsely the forces which lift men into higher life are represented by J. S. Mill and others of the same school is seen when he makes Christian men perform acts simply "because God is stronger than we are, and will damn us if we don't." A nobler man once said, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," would not be the Jesus of prophecy, the Jesus of the Gospel, the Jesus of Apostolic preaching at all, nor could He be the Jesus of Apocalyptic song. The "blood that was shed for the remission of sins" could have no meaning for any man. There is a proverb which says, "a lie has no legs;" surely such a thought as that we have been looking at is not likely to stand very long where men are able to apprehend the teachings of the Bible. But the second reason is as destitute of legs as the first. Justification is not an "entire inner change." An "entire inner change" is a thing of human consciousness, a thing in which the man's own activity has had a share, a thing of character, a thing that is the result of many an effort and many an aspiration. Justification, whatever it implies, is rather a thing of the Divine consciousness, of the Divine activity, of the relation which the Divine mind sustains to man, the view which the Divine mind takes of man's relations to law and safety. It is, so far as man is concerned, objective and not subjective. No doubt this knowledge of being justified has a mighty influence on the immediate and succeeding states of the soul. It gives, to begin with, peace

with God. The fear of punishment passes away. But peace is not alone. In its train there follow many beautiful forms of subjective change. Hope is one. Joy is another; and there are many more.

Salvation then is possible, because pardon is possible. Purity follows pardon. Salvation from the sin follows salvation from the consequences of it. The fire that consumes selfishness is kindled when the sinner accepts the forgiveness that is preached through Jesus Christ. It does not follow that because pardon comes first, that nothing else is necessary. No man in his senses ever dreamed of such a thing. Just as no man could ever say that he had exhausted the penalty due to his sin, and that, like the prisoner who has served his time, he can claim to walk abroad without fear of what the authorities may do; so no man imagines that he is to be sanctified, unless the truth of God is supreme upon the sphere of his thought and life.

When John says that the "*Son* is the Saviour of the world," he aids the seekers after truth by giving definiteness to thought. Some writers seem to imagine that they have reached an eminence in thought when they say that "God must be essentially, eternally

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self-sacrificing," and that the sacrifice by which men gain salvation "was made by God for men, wholly and solely made by God for men." But this is misleading in many ways. Who imagines that it was man that made the sacrifice? Who imagines that the judges, or the soldiers, or the mob thought of offering a sacrifice unto God for the sins of the world when they put the Son of God to death? No one. To write as if anything of the sort were involved in the position held by those who maintain that Jesus Christ did die a sacrifice for men, is to trifle and not to reason. To speak of God as "eternally self-sacrificing" is to speculate, and, without much capital of truth, attempt to win a position that never can be reached. It is specially misleading when, as an idea, it is put in the place of that deed in which Jesus offered Himself "a sacrifice unto God." John's thought is simpler, safer, profounder by far, and more true. It gathers up into itself the whole teaching of the Scripture, in which we see the Son becoming the Saviour of the world. For this end did He become man. Glowing figure and impassioned rhetoric may be allowed large licence when the imagination has become fired by the greatness of that which love and pity

have done for man, but the true foothold for calm thought is found in the fact that the Son offered Himself as a sacrifice for the world.

It would, however, just as John teaches, be quite a misrepresentation of the Saviour's sacrifice to imagine that it was designed to make, or had the effect of making, the Father more loving toward men. For he says, "The Father sent the Son." The atonement is the outcome of the Father's love. The coming of the Son is the highest expression of that love the world has ever enjoyed. To suppose that the Father had to be made loving and willing that man might be saved, is to misconceive and misrepresent the fatherly heart, and the difficulties that stood in the way of its reaching its end. From a certain theological standpoint forgiveness is supposed to be an easy affair; for that theology thus expresses itself—"It is imagined that the forgiveness of sin is a thing of transcendent difficulty, a difficulty so great that it almost baffled even God to surmount it." Allowing considerable discount for the strength of representation which the general thought has here received, we ask, Was it, after all, so very easy to forgive sin? Was it so very easy that the Christian appre-

hension of the difficulty should in this way be caricatured? Is it so very easy, for example, to bring men into that state of mind that will lead them to request or accept forgiveness? In the light of the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, would any man in his calmer moods say that it was an easy thing to forgive sin? The desire to forgive, the disposition to forgive, the determination to forgive wherever and whenever it can in love and righteousness be done, might indeed be glorious features of the Father's character; but to confound the disposition to forgive with the forgiveness itself, is not to discern things that differ. If it be not a difficult thing to forgive, why should forgiveness come to men only through the exalted Jesus? Why should forgiveness be preached only in His name? It was to overcome the difficulties, whatever they were, that the Father sent the Son. He could only be the Saviour of the world by making it easy to forgive. He did not come to act upon the desire or disposition of the Father. He did not come to kindle within Him pity and compassion for man. That was not necessary. The Son's coming was the highest manifestation of pity and fatherly love. But there were difficulties which could only be over-

come by the Son's coming to "offer a sacrifice unto God," so that He might be the Saviour of the world.

But error dies hard, and in its death-throes will utter many a wild word. It says, for example, that this doctrine of the Saviour's sacrifice is "absolutely immoral." That is a wild thing to say, but large allowance is made for what is said in agony. Remembering, however, that the whole scheme is the outcome of the Father's love, and is completed amid the love which glowed in the heart of Jesus for the world, we wonder that even extremity should have given utterance to the word "immoral." The self-sacrifice for highly benevolent ends, which the work of Jesus reveals, is surely something to command our confidence and respect. Is not much of our purest fiction and platform declamation devoted to a condemnation of selfishness and a laudation of self-sacrifice? Are not our modern moralists seeking to show us how without religion we could get on and be very moral, if only we would be less selfish and more self-sacrificing? In what sense, then, can the giving up of the only begotten by the Father, and the endurance of the shameful cross by the Son, be regarded as immoral doctrine?



To deliver that which is greatest on the earth by means which only reflect its greatness, is surely not an immoral thing. The image of the Father in man is the greatest thing earth knows, and the assumption of human nature for the redemption of it, can surely be no offence to any healthy mind. To wreath the brow of man with glories which time will never dim, can be no expression of injury meant or done. To do it by means that tell how difficult the accomplishment is, can be no objection. Surely this intense love for man, even in his ruins, merits other treatment at the hand of mortals. We know how keen is the satire that bites in our poetry, in our fiction, and in our impassioned pictures of the men who reverence the bricks that inclose a man, and the roast beef he eats, more than the nature that is being overlaid by luxury. We know how strong are the tendencies to fight the battle of money *versus* man, and how our nobler minds can lash with words of scorn these tendencies. When the "Schiller" was wrecked, the diver, whose painful duty it was to bring up the bodies and search for the treasure, one day laid his hand on a small cask containing some thousands of pounds. The bag used in bringing up discovered materials

was let down at the usual sign, and having put the treasure in it, the diver signalled to be taken up. So excited were the men on the deck of the vessel when they saw the treasure, that they forgot their duty, and, making the treasure secure, allowed the diver to go plunging to the bottom again. He had not them to thank that his life was not lost. But this is just a picture of the way in which a man's surroundings are treated as of more importance than the man himself. Was it so with Jesus Christ? In life and death did He not seek to impress the world with a high sense of the image of God in man? The material setting was nothing. It was the man, the personal, responsible, even sinning man, that was everything; and to save that which is of more value than many worlds, even by the death of the Cross, could surely be no "immoral" thing. Why after nineteen centuries should the Cross be still an offence to men? To brand with eternal infamy that which is the fountain of all the wrongs that men endure, and from which men required to be delivered, can be no objectionable thing. Held up into the light of the Saviour's life and death, what a repulsive thing sin must ever seem? The inner eye that has once

caught a glimpse of the beautiful, can never again look on sin without seeing how ugly it is. The inner ear that has only for a brief space enjoyed the diviner harmony, can never regard sin but as a discord in the universe. But the Cross will ever be to Christian thought the highest expression of what was necessary to restore the whole man to harmony, to retouch the soul until it should become radiant as with a beauty not its own.

But why, it is asked, if God be a Father, should He have sent the Son to do and endure all of which the Cross is the symbol? Why should He demand anything of the Son as a ground of pardon? Why? Just because He is a Father, a kingly Father, an infinitely wise, upright, and kind Father. A mere despot might have done it otherwise. But shall the majesty of the Father be sunk in the soft thing that mere sentimentality calls mercifulness? Every theory of retribution as well as of propitiation would say no. But why should the Sinless One suffer for the sinful? Who else, we ask, could? Could the sinful so suffer as to secure by it his own release? Only the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, could truly mani-

fest the Father's love, and at the same time offer a sacrifice on the ground of which forgiveness can be preached to man. For the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE CHARACTER OF THE FATHER.

EVERY new form of expression coming from the Saviour's lips demands attention. The words "Holy Father" is one. A wonderful one. What formula could be used that would more thoroughly express at once the intensity and the purity of Divine love, than that which the Saviour here uses? The words dip, far at least as words can, into the very depths of the Divine nature and character. Jesus seems as if He would rend thoroughly the veil that we might see God. There is more spiritual philosophy, more spiritual force, more real help for man in these two words than would be found in even the cream of all the literature outside their bearings. A deeper word has never yet been uttered. The expression is focal, into which are collected all rays of all glorious things. It is a lifetime's study. No telegram, no symbol, no message on any principle of *multum in parvo* could condense into itself so much for thought and life.

This is the Father-name—"Holy Father." In His designs through all material creation, in His commands through all moral law, in all the arrangements for reclaiming men, we have the Divine glories breaking upon us as in a prism of love; but Jesus seems to concentrate all into this great Father-name. Jesus alone knew how holy that love is that comes down to save man, and saves him in a way that brands sin and magnifies the Father-name. It is the "Holy Father," as He is seen among His erring, wayward, sinful, and wretched children, seeking to save and lift them up into the full enjoyment of His love, that we have to consider. We shall know by and by what He is among the angels, what He is among other beings not made known to us, if there be any such; but it is as He is among us that we have to think of Him as the "Holy Father."

There is in this Father-name a glimpse of great character. We sometimes ask, "What's in a name?" Possibly the man on 'Change might answer that there is at least five per cent. in it. The expectant might say that there is a passport in it. Another might say that there is in it the prophecy of failure, of defeat, in fact, of doom. A name *is* something; but in what name is there so much that is so

transcendently glorious as in that which Jesus here uses? It is the symbol of infinitely holy thoughts, and feelings, and volitions, and relationships. The disturbed condition of humanity has made us so familiar with unholy paternity, that it is surely an immense elevation of spirit to have our thoughts lifted to the idea of an absolutely "Holy Father." Into what a region of holy thought is the idea of human parentage lifted when we reflect that its archetype is found in the Divine parentage. God is a Father, but what a Father? "Holy Father," Jesus delights to call Him. Parentage in man ought thus to be a holy thing, whether on the plain of the natural or the spiritual. In the use of those singularly striking words from the lips of Jesus to designate a mortal, however high his position in any religious community, we see how daring a thing a misguided zeal on the part of men may become. This freedom is offensive; and shows, what we meet with so often, that the loveliest things get soiled and stained when polluted hands touch them. Surely it is not to mortal dwelling in the flesh we should apply the words "Holy Father."

How full of helping power for man is this name which Jesus uses! When even of im-

perfect parents the memories have been hallowed, what a play of power is felt when it is possible to look back and say, "My father was good!" We know what it is for sons to be respected, listened to, and befriended, for a father's sake. The social position which is open to many a young man, the manner in which many a youthful speaker is treated on the public platform, the safe yet prosperous circles into which he is admitted, is owing, at least in the first instance, to his father's name. His father was a good, upright, and highly respected man. But surely all this is increased to an infinite degree when we think of the name and character of the "Holy Father." To be His sons; to have the influence of His life and character in our favour; to be conscious of upwelling gratitude for the high privilege of having the honour and respect due to Him in any way cast upon us, is to have a helping, uplifting power at play within us that is of the utmost value. His name is good for any amount of helping power our souls require. One feels what a drawback there must be in the experience of the child who has no hallowed memories of a father. How difficult it must be for such a child to get into the heart of all these wonderful thoughts by which we



may know God. Orphan children who have not enjoyed the love, the care, the protection of a good father, must surely have some difficulty in rising to the conceptions of God which are possible to others more favourably situated. Thought is aided by feeling, but in a young spirit destitute of the pictures of fatherly deeds there lacks that which unseals feeling. The memories that come like dew upon the purple hill, or like sunshine on the river, in the case of children who know a father's love, are unknown things in the experience of the fatherless child. Like fragrance wafted by the wind is the name of a true father to the child who loves and obeys. It should be easier for such a child to know who and what the "Holy Father" is. And there must be a corresponding obligation on the conscience and heart of such an one to rise into all the Christian attitudes that characterise a noble childhood in relation to the Father in heaven.

There is in that Father-name a ground of greatest confidence. How calm may all the members of the Christian family be since the Father is absolutely holy. What a ground for confidence that the affairs of the vast family, the interests of the vast home, will have that management which will secure the highest

interests of every child. The strong band that binds the childlike hearts together is found in that Father-name. How often are families divided by paternal partialities, fortunes squandered by paternal weaknesses, and sins, and mental incompetence, and children beggared and exposed through lack of that in the father that could bind the home in one. If even the shadow of such a thing were to rest upon the family of the Great Father, life would not be worth a pin's purchase. But every step of the family life is planted on firm rock. There is not in the fatherly character the possibility of surprise, of disappointment, of misfortune. A holy child's pleasure in the Holy Father's character is the very secret of eternal calmness. Into such an experience no storm can come.

There is in the Father-name a great argument for childlike conduct. Blessed is the child who, when he looks at his human father, feels that he knows no more upright man than he is. Whatever he may have inherited from him physically, temperamentally, socially, it is something to have drawn out before his eyes the moral life of his father in a way to command his love, esteem, and respect; and to feel that his father's name is a daily stimulus to high thought and life. Such a father desires and

expects, of course, that his child shall be good. He has a right to expect it. With his consciousness of defects, he is at the same time conscious of relative uprightness, of uprightness such as is fitted to give weight to authority, and a ground for hope that his influence has not been adverse to his child's interests. Well, the "Holy Father," who has no consciousness of defects, but who is and must be conscious of doing everything before His children that is fitted to command their love, desires that His children shall be holy, and has a right to expect that it shall be so. He has a right to say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." There is nothing in Him to repel love, to shake confidence, or make it unwise or unsafe to imitate His character. Finite spirits in their highest moods feel how blessed it is to get less of self and more of God at the heart of their experience. As the mother who should set her house in order, making all things bright and sweet for a joyful holiday, waiting the arrival of the friend for whom her children look, and who is to share and increase their joy, does the Christian heart set its affections in order, that all feeling may anticipate Him round whom the holiest desires gather, and in whose presence there will be an eternal holiday. Man's

best behaviour is but a poor thing at the best; but when, under the consciousness of such high relationship, he is inspirited to go from well to better, and daily surpass himself, there is supplied the condition which the Father will bless for the purpose of making His child holy.

We know what it is for the young man going into business, going to college, going into public life, to resolve on good behaviour, and success if possible, if it were only for his father's sake. The name he bears will be kept in its purity and power if he can do it. Such is the attitude and the aspiration which the "Holy Father" expects shall characterise His children in all their activities. And hence they, too, are called in a relative sense holy. They are saints, not in the exclusive sense in which we regard those who belong to the hagiology of a particular church, and who have been canonised. Alas, our friends as well as our foes may draw our portrait in a way to make us wonder what it stands for. They may not work with the same colours, nor fill up the same outlines, but they may be equally a long way from the original. So has it often been with Christian men. Unfriendly hands have given some sad caricatures, while the doings of designing friends, lifting very

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common character into the position of ideals, have given sad cause for ridicule and stumbling. That, however, must not close the eyes to the possibilities and obligations of Christian life. To be holy like the Father is the deepest desire of a true child who has ever looked into the Father's face. He finds in the Father's character the strongest argument for high-souled life. He finds too, just as Jesus did, that when life is agitated and there is a great pressure upon the heart, the name of the Father is a soothing power. Just as the thunder overhead, though loud, may be high enough, and sufficiently far away to admit of the bird's song filling your ear; even so, the tumults and troubles of life, noisy as they are, need not hinder its quieter music from cheering the heart. The Father-name, revealing as it does the greatest character, giving as it does the surest ground for confidence, and affording as it must the safest stimulus to high conduct, will always be the true source of blessedness to man. "They that know Thy name shall put their trust in Thee."

## CHAPTER X.

## ADMISSION INTO THE FATHER'S FAMILY.

LUTHARDT, in his suggestive volume on *Fundamental Truths of Christianity*, reproduces the pretty little anecdote of the king's talk with a child. The late King of Prussia was accustomed, during his stay at Rugen, to amuse himself with children, and to examine them by showing them all sorts of objects, such as stones, fruits, &c., and asking them to what kingdom (animal, mineral, or vegetable) they severally belonged, till at length, pointing to himself, he said, "And to what kingdom do I belong?" Upon which the child who was questioned replied, "To the kingdom of heaven." The child could scarcely mean to flatter the king. He was not studying how to secure royal favours by paying the king an undeserved compliment. The child's answer, designed or otherwise, touches the highest possible attainment of human souls. There is a wide gulf between the kingdoms of matter, vegetables, and animals, and the high kingdom of

which the king's scholar for the moment was thinking. I have seen a suggestive little picture entitled, "Can't you Talk?" A little child in night-dress is sitting on the floor, looking into the face of a very wise-looking dog. There are, beyond doubt, some lines of communication between them, but the child, not quite satisfied with the amount of information he is receiving from his dog friend, says to him, "Can't you talk?" The absence of this power of talking suggests the distance there is between the dog and his young but more exalted companion. Whatever scientific value there may be in the *bow-wow* theory of language, we are confident that there is something behind the child's words that is not behind the dog's bark.

But when we have risen in thought to the exalted nature which the child and the king possess; when we have seen how the rational, personal being bears the image of the Great Father of man; when we have seen how the circle of responsible nature and life incloses every unit of the race in the Father's family, we have still to deal with the distinction between a moral nature and a beautiful character, between a high relationship and an intelligent acquaintance with, and cheerful discharge of, the duties wrapped up in that

relationship. A man as a son bears the impress of the Divine nature, but he may not, as an obedient son, reflect the Divine character. He may not choose to think like his Father, feel like his Father, act like his Father. Generically he is a child, but morally he may be neither a loving nor a lovely child. His nature is high, but his character is low; and such, indeed, is the case wherever there is sin. Hence we have to say with Pearson, that there are degrees of sonship; or, rather, we have to say with the Bible, that a child may become a sinner, a prodigal, an alien, and therefore condemned, so that if ever, as a sinner, he is to be forgiven, and, as a prodigal, restored to the home-hearth, and, as an alien, enfranchised in the wider, holier freedom of the saved sons of God, there must be some wise, righteous way that secures his obedience while his guilt is forgiven.

We are here dealing with the subjective condition of a man's safety, a man's admission into the circle of the pardoned, saved sons of God. What is that condition? Or, how shall we answer in New Testament form the question which the Lord puts through Jeremiah,—“How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage?”



The Old Testament form of the answer is, "Thou shalt call me My Father; and shalt not turn away from me." Such an answer, if we go deep enough to find it, implies the essential elements of faith, on which the Scriptures so universally insist. It is, then, by faith men are admitted into the Father's saved family. It is, of course, true that the saved family are characterised by truth, love, and high obedience; but we are not dealing just now with what a man becomes when he is admitted into the family, but how he may find his way there. We repeat, then, that it is by faith. Here, if anywhere, we may say, "Only believe."

But when we say that it is by faith, it is necessary to be definite, and intelligently apprehend the object of faith. Stumbling-stones lie thick around the footsteps of many minds as they wander over the ground it is necessary to traverse here. A man has faith in God as the Creator of the universe, as the Father of man, as the moral Ruler of the universe; but this is not what is meant by the faith that admits into the saved family. A man may assure himself that he has scientific ground for asserting his faith in theism, but that is a long way from the faith that saves the soul. To put manhood, or kingdom, or pope, or pro-

gress, or church, or creed, before the mind as the object of faith, is simply to divert the mind from that which saves. Faith in the true, faith in the beautiful, faith in the good, faith in the nobler aspirations of the race, faith in the poetry and yearnings of a high humanitarianism, are interesting things to talk about; but to put them forth as the dark passages through which men are to find their way into the family, is to shut the door of hope in the face of the great sinning, sorrowing race. Not without meaning is Fichte's despair of raising men into the blessed life, since they are so far below the reach of his philosophy. The Apostle John, when he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus Christ is born of God," opens the door of hope, and shows us how any man may become a new child of God. When Paul says, "Ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," he fastens thought down upon the one condition of Christian childhood. When the Saviour Himself says, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," we feel shut up to lay our hand in His hand, and let Him lead us to the Father. Not even to a lofty and full *idea* of the Father can we come by any other way than by Jesus. It is in His thought we get the rounded conception of the Father's

nature, character, relations, and will. No man can come back to the conscious favour of the Father but by Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Thought can only traverse the distance sin has made by taking Christ as the way. Coming between us and the Father, giving Himself to the Father for us, thought rises through Him to the forgiving Father. For not otherwise can a man come up into the loving and abiding relationship of child. For only in Christ can a man enjoy God. Thus it is that, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

Thus, then, the condition of admission into the saved family is one which is demanded of all. Nationality cannot dispense with it. Culture cannot rise above it. Station is not independent of it. However vast the endowments which any man who is a sinner may otherwise possess, however wide his experience, it is still demanded of him that he have faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. It is not demanded of him that he should compress all his thoughts of Jesus into a few words; it is not demanded of him that what he does say, he should say it as other men do. The apostles run their thoughts into different word-moulds, but none of them take a form that contradicts the great

truth, that through Jesus we get the forgiveness of sin and introduction into the saved family. It is this central thought that must regulate our thinkings, so that a man may be able consciously to say to himself, "I believe in Jesus." When he has said it to himself, he will say it to others. He will thus believe with his heart, and confess with his mouth, the Lord Jesus, and be saved.

The condition of admission into the family of the saved is thus adapted to all. If any high intellectual attainment were necessary, a great many men would be debarred, for it is only a minority that can reach, in the present state of things, high attainments. Scholars, philosophers, poets, men of science, statesmen, and men with means and leisure, might manage to find admission, but the majority of men would be shut out. If high moral attainments were necessary, the difficulty would be still greater, and the circle of the saved be made correspondingly small. For large minds do not always manifest lovely character. Power is not always pious. Genius does not always work in godly grooves. So that the number admitted would be a very small one. Would there be any? Who is the man so morally beautiful as to be able to stand up and say,

"On my own merits I claim admission into the family of the saved?" There is none righteous, no not one. Hence the condition of admission has to be very simple, easily understood, and level to all measures of responsible power. It is thus adapted to all men everywhere. To stamp upon this condition the image and superscription of any creed which men, met in solemn assembly, have formulated; to stamp upon it the image of any church service, or otherwise important ordinance, is to deface the image the Master has stamped upon it, and render that difficult which He meant to be easy to men. To confound what it is always necessary to speak of as *simple faith* with deep feeling, or high moral action, is to depart from God's "easy, artless, unencumbered plan," and follow methods that bewilder men. Believe and live! Only believe.

But the condition, while in itself simple, is radical in the change which it occasions both in relationship and character. In this respect it is in perfect harmony with the Divine method of managing the universe. The means may be simple while the ends are very complex. Physical analogies illustrative of this principle will throng round the thoughtful

mind. They come in, too, from the spheres of politics and commerce. We find them in human character as well. See how a man's main purpose, faithfully followed, will involve results which do not quite appear to him when he makes up his mind. See how many things a man attains to, while he seeks to rise to what he calls his ideal. A man is conscious of loving knowledge, and cherishes that love. What comes of it? Why, things at which "fat stupidity" only stares. A man loves esteem. What comes of it? Let the monuments that ornament our squares and halls tell. A man loves power. What comes of it? Thrones as they rise and fall are but the echo of what it does. A man loves society. What comes of that? Families, churches, cities, nations, heaven, hell. A man loves property. How far will that lead? Listen to him as, standing in the midst of houses and lands, he is ready to say, "I am monarch of all I survey;" or, as he pulls down his barns and builds larger ones, saying to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." What God will say to him by and by is another matter. A man believes a lie. What will that do for him? That of course depends

upon the relation of the lie to his life and interests. We often see how men and nations are carried to the verge of awful mistakes by means of a lie. Armies march keeping time to a lie. Panics play their pranks at the bidding of a lie. Homes grow dismal, and are desolated by the influence of a lie. Need it excite any surprise, then, that simple faith in Jesus Christ should work in another direction, and produce results, proximate and remote, that fill and thrill the soul with a heavenly joy? As the root-element of character, how abundant and beautiful will be the fruit of faith in Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of speculation, but of history and experience. Whosoever is willing to try it shall know that it is so. He that doeth of the will shall know of the doctrine. Hence the need there is for keeping this simple idea of faith from being overlaid by other mental, emotional, or moral states, as in books and pulpits it is unfortunately apt to be. For how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How shall trust, and love, and high choice, and self-surrender take place, if men do not receive the message of love which Heaven has sent? "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His

Son. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power or privilege, to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE CHILDREN OF THE FATHER.

WHEN King Humbert succeeded to the throne of Italy, he made, according to custom, a speech foreshadowing his aims and the means by which he would reach them. Reviewing Emmanuel's life and the rich bequest it left to Italy, the new King Humbert in closing his speech, hoped that he would so conduct himself that when he too was gone, the people should be able to say of him, "He was worthy of his father." The wish assumes, of course, that his father had worth, real sterling worth. That assumed, the wish to be like him was worthy at once of father and son. But this, as we see, is sonship on a high plain. It is childhood that is realised in large, broad, deep, and lofty character.

Such, too, is the idea which Jesus expresses when, in the words of Matt. v. 45, He says, "That ye may be the children of your Father." How pleasing it is to the parent sometimes

when a stranger, or a friend, taking the little boy in his arms, says at once with freedom and truth, "He is the child of his father." It is meant that the child is like the father. But that would be simply dealing with the cast or expression of the countenance. The thought of the Saviour will carry us a long way farther than that, and make us think of the physiognomy of thought and feeling and volition; and even farther than that, and make us think of the physiognomy of character. There are good judges of this mental and moral physiognomy in the universe, who are able to trace resemblances with great accuracy, having an eye for the faintest as well as the boldest and most sharply cut lines; and Jesus is anxious that there should be very many men of whom such judges might be able to say, "They are the children of their Father." Thus, just as the parent may have his miniature, not on vellum, or ivory, or paper, or canvas; but in the beautiful little fresh face that looks up lovingly into his, so the heavenly Father may see His resemblance, not in twinkling stars, or blazing suns, or blooming flowers, or giant trees; but in the merciful feelings, and large aims, and noble efforts of Christian men. The

Godlike man is God's miniature. The very thought thrills one. It does not indeed apologise for hero worship, but it is quite enough to make us reverence a good man, to see in his life the Divine likeness, to see in his conduct and relations to men generally the lineaments of that large love that gives the sunshine and the rain to good and bad alike. "'Neath the floor of God that is pierced by the stars" there is nothing so beautiful, so attractive, so Divine-like as a soul that resembles, and longs more and more to resemble, the Father who is in heaven. To pity men, to intelligently compassionate them, to work for their recovery to mental and moral health, to trace upon their life some line that likens them to God, is the highest possible style of life to man.

Now, it is the *possibility* of rising into the highest phase of *affiliation* to God that Jesus sets before us when He speaks of our being the "children of our Father." This possibility is rooted in our nature, for we are created in the Divine image. It is rooted also in our relationship, consciously appreciated, for we may be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. It is rooted in the principle of imitation, by which, watching and sympathising

with the ways of the Father, we may copy them, till within the sphere in which a finite being may act we may become like God. It is a poor philosophy that would make the possibilities of man stop short of this; that would find his ideal of character among the erring, and his destiny among the clay. Jesus has no smile for such a philosophy. He will not so cramp the human soul. He gives its powers a larger scope for play, and holds up before it the highest ideal to which its thought can be directed. It is not simply, then, among the mysteries of the metaphysics of existence that we are to seek this blissful affiliation to God. Jesus assumes that deeper thought, and makes it the basis on which He builds up this other and grand possibility. He is not discussing the science of mind, or the origin of reason; He is not discussing the process by which mind, as such, may be developed from that which is not mind. All that is infinitely beneath the Saviour's thought, and is left to the pseudo-science of the day. He is dealing with the possibilities of moral likeness to God, with the possibility of resembling the Father in His love for man, in the impartiality of His love, in His forgiving disposition, and in His efforts to brighten and

fertilise not only the earth, but the human soul.

But the Saviour lifts this idea of possibility on to the plain of duty, and makes that which is within our power binding upon our conscience. It is a privilege, indeed, to wear the Father's likeness, and be taken at once by men as children of the Father; but the privilege comes to us as an obligation. In the sphere of the material, the mechanical, or the miraculous, we may not be able to imitate the Father, and so there may be no accountability pressing upon us; but in the moral it is otherwise. One man *can* love another. He may not be able to delight in all his ways, to approve of all his principles, and maxims, and aims, to smile with complacency upon his attitudes and acts in relation to God; but he can love him; can love him much, and pity him, and bless him, and pray for him, even if he be his own foe, and ever so bad. Now, just because the Father does all this, and just because it is all possible to men, it comes to them as duty as well as privilege and power. Moralists are not sure just now how to map out man's duty, or on what to base it, or by what motives to secure its performance; but Jesus puts this matter so that all our moral

nerves become sensitive to its touch. We feel we ought to be like our Father in our compassion for men. J. S. Mill, speaking of the ethical doctrine of the Gospel, says, "Its ideal is negative rather than positive, passive rather than active, innocence rather than nobleness, abstinence from evil rather than energetic pursuit of good." This mere caricature of Christian ethics receives a striking rebuke by the duties which Jesus lays upon men in the passage we are now considering. Is there no "nobleness" in loving one's enemies, in blessing them that curse, in praying for them that persecute? Is there no "activity" in doing good to them that hate? Is there nothing "positive" in directing all the nobler currents of the heart, so as to aim at the weal of men who are thoughtless, even of their own well-being? Is there no "energetic pursuit of good" when words that bless are uttered into human ears, and words of prayer for bad men are uttered in the ear of God? It were an easy matter to show how all the teachings of the New Testament might be quoted in refutation of this misrepresentation of duty as binding upon Christian men. It is almost incredible that educated men could be betrayed by any influence into the utterance of such opinions,

with the whole book of Christian martyrology open before them, with the cities and villages of the world brightened and blessed by institutions that Christian activity has raised, with the record of missionary labour illustrating how much more fascinating fact is than fiction, with every bookshop and every public and private library telling of the moral marvels which Christian nobility and action have accomplished. But even the sun looks dim when seen through a fog, and philosophers are not exempt from the blinding influence of theory and prejudice. We are safer sitting at the feet of Jesus, when seeking to learn how we may rise into the highest phase of affiliation with God; for He illumines, as with more than electric light, the whole sphere of action that becomes men in whom the Divine character is mirrored on the earth. His words are a lamp by which we may thread our path through every dark passage on our way out into the light of the Divine-like life. How like the Father would the children be, if the Elder Brother were more revered and trusted by men.

But that which comes to us as possibility and duty, does not leave us in any difficulty as to the process by which this end may be

reached. It is never a good thing for young artists to work from bad models, or for an apprentice to work beside an inferior artisan. The danger and damage, however, are much greater when a man's moral pattern is low. When power is allowed to be latent, or, being stimulated, is misdirected, positive injury is done. Hence Jesus puts before us the highest Actor, and the highest forms of action. The strength and tendencies of the father's character will give colour and form to that of the appreciative and imitative child. Happy is the child who was never tempted to think his father a fool; who never had cause to blush for his father's narrowness, meanness, harshness, and want of compassion for the erring. Happy is the child who has never, in the home, in the playground, in the workshop, in the street, or in the public meeting, seen a nobler man than his father. The eyes of such a child may be in his heart rather than his head, some may be disposed to say, but it will be a good thing for the child notwithstanding. The star may shine as bright and guide as safely by being set in the heart, as if it were set in the brain. But about the Father who is in heaven there can be no doubt, and it is His ways we are called upon

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to imitate. To take His patience as our pattern, His love as our law, His mercy as our model, is to get away from all narrowness and conventionalism, and allow the streams of compassionate feeling to flow out to all men. "See how I do it," the father will sometimes say to his child; and as the child takes up the instrument and wields it, coming as near to the father's action as he might be expected to do, the onlooker will say, patting, it may be, the child on the head, "You are, indeed, your father's son." It is so the Christian man, beginning at the beginning, rises through all the stages, till he reaches this highest phase of affiliation with the Father.

Through what loophole of any of the towers which men have built up in these times, can we see so wide and bright a horizon as that which Jesus opens to view? On what road, traced by human engineer, can you rise to a height so glorious? We are lectured on the perfectibility of men, but how is it to be reached? We are reading every day about development, which speaks indeed of a lowly start, but cannot point to a glorious goal. To tell us, as Edith Simcox does, "that to live according to nature, and to die a natural death, is the sum of all the natural good we know

or can think of as attainable by man," and then quote the Stoic's question—"What good is it to the bubble while it holds together, and what harm when it is burst?" is to hold out to us a poor enough present and a dull enough future. Through such a loophole there is nothing very far off or bright to be seen. Nor is there anything near that is worth looking at; for the mere fancy pictures which are painted for us about "living according to nature" lack warmth and worth. For how will men interpret such an idea of living? In the *Contemporary* for Feb. 1877, Max Muller has an article "On the Origin of Reason," in which there is a remarkable quotation from a book, a few sentences of which may throw a little light on what such a life would be. Here is a specimen of the ethics of the quotation—"Hatred answers well when we cannot have love." "Truth is good so long as it gives us pleasure, but lying is good also, and perjury, hypocrisy, trickery, flattery, if they secure us advantage." "Faithfulness is good so long as it pays, but treason is good also, if it fetches a high price." "Fraud is good, theft, robbery, and murder, if they lead to wealth and enjoyment." "Life is good, so long as it is a riddle; good is suicide also, after the riddle has been

guessed." This will suffice as a glimpse of the near and far off possibilities of man as seen from the outlooks of modern thought. Such a life could never resemble what is lovely, or be reached by any method that is noble. To see, however, even in the sunshine and the shower, manifestations of the Father's kindness, is to get a glimpse of a higher model and feel the stirrings of higher possibilities within the soul. To sit admiringly in the presence of Divine love, to throw the heart open to its benign power, till, raised and refined by it, we are able in our relation to our fellow-men to reflect it in measure, is surely a nobler life than the mean thing which a godless ethics would enforce.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE ABBA FATHER.

BARING GOULD has a suggestive chapter on the "names of God." "The idea of God," he says, "having been conceived, it became necessary for man to find a name which should express his apprehension of the Deity." The line of his argument excludes reference to the name by which the Christian calls upon God, but it may suggest, what indeed is a matter of consciousness, that our idea of God grows. Memory may not be able to throw much light on the time when, or the manner in which, the idea got root in our being; we may not have been always cognisant of the sunny hours and genial rains which fertilised it; but we know what ripe fruit has fallen from it, and how increasingly defiant of all storms the growth of the idea has become. We must not, of course, hide from our eyes the influences that may hinder or help it, that may chequer and vary its development. The intellectual

and moral forces that play upon us daily are not without their results. There is much to unsettle men in these times, unless they are able, by severe thought and deep conviction, to put down the foot firmly. If some leading names in literature had all the power they aim at, our idea of God would be a very small thing indeed. A big name might be invented for it, with but little meaning in the name. It is otherwise, however, when our idea of God is allowed to grow under the helping influences which Jesus brings. We reach a fresh stage when we are able to cry "Abba Father."

The expression has gathered round it a considerable amount of discussion, and, as might be expected, a little speculation as well. It is used three times in the New Testament; once by the Saviour and twice by Paul. The underlying elements of thought and feeling are understood, but there is some little difference of opinion on this peculiar mode of expressing them. Why should the Saviour in His prayer in Gethsemane employ two languages in using the name Father? Why should Paul also, when speaking of the free spirit which animates the believer in Jesus, represent him as speaking in two different languages? Why this seeming pleo-

nasm, this redundancy of expression? and why, in seeking an equivalent, draw from another language? Is it conformity to the custom of giving to persons a variety of names, such as we have it existing even in our own country? Is the one word simply an explanation or interpretation of the other, such as we often hear public speakers make, when, having used some technical term, they attempt the expression of the thought in terms more simple? Bengel says, Mark added the word "Father" by way of interpretation; but we are not sure that Bengel should attribute to Mark any such deed or design. Lightfoot is somewhat doubtful, and says it may "perhaps be an addition of the Evangelist himself, explaining the Aramaic word after his wont." Stuart says that "Augustine and Calvin think that the design of using both words is to show that both Jews and Greeks, each in their own respective language, would call on God as a Father." But Stuart objects to this, and refers to the Saviour's use of words as putting such an idea out of the question. But what if, as Dr. Morison puts it, "the dual form of the appellation is delightfully fitted to suggest that in His great work He personated in His single self not Jews only, but Gentiles also?"

And not only "fitted," we would add, but *designed*. And so Paul may have caught the spirit and aim of the Master's words with a firmer and more comprehensive grasp than we are apt to imagine, and Augustine and Calvin may have seen deeper into Paul's reason for imitating his Master than Stuart gives them credit for. And thus in the far-reaching design of both Jesus and Paul, we have, as Lightfoot says, in "this phrase a speaking testimony to that fusion of Jew and Greek which prepared the way for the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen." The idea of Father clasps not the languages only, but the people also. What other word so calculated to consecrate all language and love! What other word so fitted as a basis for all the nations to meet on and be made one! When men in their own language shall intelligently cry "Father," then shall the brighter visions of prophet and poet be realised, and the end for which the Saviour died and the Apostle toiled be gained. Grandly prophetic of that time is the significant expression "Abba Father."

But it may mean more; it may illustrate how the idea of Fatherhood evokes the deepest filial feeling. Stier objects to the notion of Grotius that the redoubled cry is a testi-

mony of deep feeling. We know not why he should object. In the only three instances in which we have the words, there is everything to justify the opinion that deep feeling is expressed. Unless we simply take the one word as the interpretation of the other, as a mere addition by the writers, it seems we are shut up to the idea of deep feeling responding to the idea of Fatherhood. It is the child-cry coming, not from the surface of the nature, but from its depths. The words are not the expression of reverence merely, or dependence, or deference, but of deep filial affection; and it is to the idea of Fatherhood they respond. How much larger and more tender the word Father is, than the word Master, or Magistrate, or King, or Lord, or Judge. The paternal element touches with rare power the deepest depths of the heart. In the hour of a great sorrow, when the pressure is too much for the springs of life to bear, and when the events of the hour crowd together, and the uncertainty of what is coming next unnerves a man, how blessed it is to be able to say "Father," even if we only meant an earthly father. But when, as Jesus has taught us in His sorrow, we can say Father as He said it, how blessed beyond the power of words must that soul be,



It is thus that, while through the Saviour's expression of deep feeling there shines a light and glory in upon ours, we, through our deep feeling and the expression we give it, get very near to His. What a wonderful golden key sorrow becomes, and how many lockfast chambers of the heart and life open before its power.

"I seemed to know as muckle then as he,  
Because I was sae sad."

So it is that companions in sorrow will sing of the influence of each other's life.

And it illustrates also the way in which the idea of Fatherhood begets the most *childlike familiarity*. Only in the home circle can such feelings play, and such familiarity be used. It is the child, not the subject, not the servant, that cries "Abba Father." The child may be a subject, may be also a servant, but in such relationships the desire of the heart would be expressed in other language than that which the child uses. Refinement of feeling and manners is always beautiful and becoming on the part of a child; but it is not necessary, it is not natural indeed, that it should express itself in courtly language. Affection gives freedom. The charm of the family is in the freedom which love imparts.

The parental heart, shining like a warm sun in the centre of the home, draws young affection to it, as the flowers turn to the heat and light. There is life, and growth, and freedom, and play, where there is this meeting of family affection. There is no bondage, and no slavish fear. The bonds that love wears are soft and easily worn. Love feels no load. It is thus that the child-cry has familiarity and freedom in it. It is the child's privilege to speak as no other one can or ought to the father. For, to the parent's ear there is no music so sweet as the loving and reasonable expression of the child-heart. Now, it is the knowledge of the love and kindness that are implied in the Divine Fatherhood that gives this feeling of freedom to the Christian. It is by this the never-dying fires are kindled in the human child. It is by this that "the earth and every common sight" become "apparelled in celestial light," and that the man with here and there a grey hair upon him, can stand up with all the emotion of a child within him, and say, "Abba Father."

But there is not only this familiarity and deep feeling in the words, there is also an intense earnestness in them. When they were used by Jesus, there was even an agony of

earnestness pressed into their utterance. As used by Paul they are a "cry." "Living with the Father on terms of free-born liberty," there are nevertheless moments in a Christian experience when the language of familiarity rises into the language of anguish. Though in the Divine family, men are still on the earth. It is not the most congenial place for a Christian heart to be. Even Jesus seems to have had quite enough of it, and could say with joy, "And now come I to thee." It is not in hours of persecution simply, nor in martyrdom, that the pressure is felt which raises the cry of anguish. When the lonely thinker is wrestling in the wilderness with some new thought that tests his loyalty to truth, and his readiness to go whithersoever it may lead; when the coldness of the times threatens to send a death-chill to the heart that would glow and burn with zeal; when the interests of the Gospel so dear to the heart are being sacrificed by prejudice, by party feeling, by indifference, and by misrepresentation; when the name of Christ is dishonoured among men, and the temptation to speak no more in that name is becoming strong, there is a pressure on the heart that can only relieve itself in a cry of intensest earnestness. The repetition gives us the idea

of emphasis or urgency. It is the most impassioned feeling that finds utterance, such as a child might utter in the night, or when immediate help is needed. To such a cry we may be sure the Father's ear is never closed. As a child's whisper will sometimes wake the family, even the gentlest ruffle on the heart will not pass the heavenly Father's notice. How much more shall a cry of anguish reach Him and bring Him to our relief!

It does not follow, then, that the child-life can do away with the necessity for the child-cry, even in a bitter form. Sin has done too much damage to men to admit of all things being put right in a few years. A body thrown out of balance, a mind thrown out of harmony, and having to dwell in a society equally discordant, will give occasion for many an "Abba Father;" but importunity will not be offensive when it comes from a child in pain or danger. And should the vision for which the eyes wait seem to tarry, that must not be construed into a want of fatherly interest or complacency in the child's cry. There are circumstances in which even while a man is speaking, the answer will come; but there are other circumstances which call upon him to "wait." He may be sure that no confiding

child will be injured or neglected by the "Abba Father."

Nor can such a feeling as the words express be regarded as a bit of soft sentimentalism; for the highest, holiest manhood gave it utterance. The cry, if it expresses weakness, came from the greatest strength earth ever knew. How can our modern materialists and pseudo-philosophers explain that? If the theory of development be a true one, then, as we are standing on the very apex of moral character when we are standing by the side of Jesus, it must be true that the highest phase of development leads the heart to cry "Abba Father." The highest form which humanity has yet assumed does not speak to us of the "unknown," of the "notself," of material force, but of the Father. Whatever else there is in this cry, there is, to say the least of it, much to which a great deal that passes for philosophy must appear to be very foolishness itself.

Equally faulty would be the assertion by any form of religion that such freedom as the words imply would be unbecoming on the part of men who have sinned; for there is no irreverence in the cry. The devotional feeling never so flowers out into perfect beauty as

when it assumes this attitude. It is moreover for the very purpose of producing this freedom that the Divine Spirit has been given to man. An æsthetic religion, running itself into stiff and unelastic forms, putting on, as it were, regal attitudes, pressing into its service classical music, and arranging itself in highly-coloured vestments, may refuse to speak familiarly to the Father; but that is not religion as Jesus taught it, as Paul practised it, and as it has lifted the heavy burden from the heart through all the years. The soul in its highest moods loves to cry "Abba Father."

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

"THE universe is all aglow with the lamp-light and hearth-light of our Father's house." So says the author of the *Supernatural in Nature*. The charge of indulging in rhapsody and romance, often enough brought against preachers when dwelling upon the attractions of heaven, may occasionally be reasonable enough. The sensuous may overlap the spiritual. The interest in locality may predominate over the interest in character. Yet the reverent use of material symbol may greatly aid the mind in its conceptions of what the future shall be. Nothing could be more foolish than the indiscriminate objections that are taken to the idea of heaven as a place. To all finite existences there must be place. The simple being in a place will not, as we know, make up our idea of heaven. There must be a glory within that answers to the glory without; nevertheless that outer glory is

not the less real on that account. Hence, while there is to be a "name," there is also to be a "local habitation." There is to be a "Holy city," a "New Jerusalem." There is to be a society. There is to be a family. There is to be a home. What a warmth, what a beauty and freshness Jesus throws upon the universe by representing it as His "Father's house!" The imagination is taken captive while the whole heart is made to glow. Rising from the study of any book on astronomy, and looking out of doors when the heavens are full of stars, what a commentary we get on the depth and sweep of the wonderful words, "My Father's house." Thought runs up through orders and systems till, in that centre of centres, where angels veil their faces, it rests in the Father's presence. It sits down in the Father's house. Having come down from heaven, Jesus alone was able to tell us how great and glorious that home must be. But then, what human words could have conveyed what Jesus could have told? What science of the time could have taken it in? Even now, were He to descend again and speak of all its wonders, who would believe Him? The clashing prejudices of scientific systems would break upon His words now, even as the



clashing claims of religious systems broke upon his words when He was here before ; for in certain circles men are nothing if they are "not critical," as Shakespeare would say.

And so, after many a weary journey, along many a crooked path in experience, we are to come at last to the Fatherland. The picturing powers of the mind fail to present its many attractions. What will it be? Or, rather, what will it not be? Our highest conceptions of beauty, of harmony, of blessedness, must needs come far short of the one Happy Home into which the joint heirs with Christ are gathered. To the pilgrim "pining for his distant home," the words of the Master are peculiarly welcome. The land hitherto so "very far off," is now very nigh. The "King in His beauty" is not going to hold a mere leveé or drawing-room, where only the high in rank or fortune are to be honoured, but a gathering of the royal children on the home-hearth of the Father's house.

We do not forget that neither Jesus nor His disciples were in the mood for either poetic or scientific descriptions of that great unseen universe when He uttered these attractive words. It was a moment in which every thought was steeped in tender feeling ; hence

it was quite enough just to lift the veil a little and allow a portion of the glory to be seen. And so He does not speak of the "Palace of the Great King," nor of the "New Jerusalem," nor of the "Temple of God," but of the "Father's house." There is a picture in the expression. There is poetry in it too. The warm word was meant to shine out upon the darkness and cold with which sorrow, uncertainty, and fear were chilling the disciples to the heart. He could not leave them comfortless, and hence, in addition to other things, He holds before their eyes a vision of the future, when they should be gathered into the Father's home.

For Jesus does not mean to speak merely of a *house*, cold and comfortless, lacking beauty and arrangement, where no lovelinks bind the heart, and no feeling dances to the music of home-joy. The house is a home, where hearts throb, and the fountains of feeling play and sparkle in the light of the paternal smile. The ties that bind are not simply those of citizens, but of brethren; not simply those of subjects, but of children. Herein the thought of Jesus rises immeasurably above the views of men to whom the universe is only a vast ingenious machine, originating somehow, but having no

great object to be gained by its existence. He invests it with a meaning that has a charm for the heart. The flower and the forest, the stone and the star, the calm and the storm, all centres and all circles, seas and suns, and far up systems, are but certain aspects of the furniture and fittings that make the house of the Father a home for His children. Meanwhile the banquet-room is being prepared for the children who are gathering home from many lands, to go no more out for ever.

Now Jesus is not himself the dupe, nor would He make His disciples the dupes, of a mere metaphor. He is not soothing their sorrow by a beautiful fancy. He is too honest for that. He will hold no phantom before their eyes. What He speaks about He sees, and He wishes them to see, if, for the time being, it should be through His eyes. That home is as real as is the living Father. It is to no purpose that men tell us that neither the Father nor the home can be known. Such men are not the measure of truth. The circle of their eye is not commensurate with the circle of the universe. Here is One who knows, who sees, and can speak with authority. We see the future as He has put it under this attractive aspect of the Father's house. The man who puts a

telescope into my hand enables me to see a star I could not otherwise see. The traveller who gives me an accurate account of China, lets me look at the country through his eyes. In the same way, when Jesus speaks of the future under this aspect, I know that for Christian men there is a future that is real and glorious.

It is in this way Jesus crowns with glory and love all our thinkings about the future. His words are as a pillar of light, behind which the soul can move with steady step onward to the Father's house. There is no melting away amid the azure of the past in His teachings. Creature personality is not absorbed. Conscious life is not destroyed. The child-heart remains capable for ever of rising into and reciprocating the Father's love. The house is a home, and the home is one in which family life is a consciously happy thing. It is thus the heart is calmed in the prospect of passing away from the earth. For we fear nothing that can disturb this hope. Monuments have been uncovered that have dispelled notions to which men clung; but we are confident no monument can be uncovered in the heavens or the earth that can prove that the Father and His house are only a dream. Children of the

light are not to vanish in the darkness, but are to be partakers of the inheritance in light.

See, then, how Jesus teaches men to distinguish between the Father and the house. The lesson is needed. Materialism thinks it quite scientific to speak of the great house, while it denies the living Father. But what a slip in scientific thought it is to speak of moral and intelligent children who never had a moral and intelligent Father, to speak of personal creatures who have not had a personal creator, to speak of a dependent universe that has no mighty will to depend on. There is a house, but no one built it. It has symmetry, beauty, and order, part answering to part, and all exhibiting the highest design, but no one designed it. Will a mechanic allow you to say that that steam-engine jumped in completeness upon the rails, which of themselves also took their place? Even a monkey, could it only make a stone axe, would feel offended if you said the axe made itself. The gorilla, could it only sing "a man's a man for a' that," would be offended if you said the song composed itself. The blackbird, could it only understand what you mean, would feel affronted if you said its nest grew. The house then is not the Father, as pantheism would teach. It is

not self-originating and independent of the creating will of the Father, as materialism says it is. Every house on this planet is built by some man, but the great house which comprehends them all is built by God.

But the thought of Jesus goes to the inner centre of things when He speaks of the Father's home. It is of that house as home, as heaven, as the place where the good gather, and where the sublimer manifestations of the Father are given, that He speaks. Had He cared to describe it for us, what He could have said of its foundation, the pillars and the pavement of it, the ceiling and the dome of it, the firmness and glory of it! He is content, however, to allow the imagination to work on the many mansions in which, we are assured, there is room and rest and real family life for all the faithful. The millions of believing children who through the centuries are gathered home will not find the place too small in any way. Its amplitude will be adequate to all the tribes that go up to the house of God. If physical science has not been fooling us as she has lifted the veil from a portion of the unseen universe; if the conceptions which the Bible gives of the arrangements that are made for the race have been at all apprehended, we

may be confident that the Father's house is built upon a vast scale, and that no surprise of numbers will ever demand enlargement. The "multitude which no man can number" will not in any way feel cramped or crowded. The circumference which the eye of the Saviour swept at that moment may thus be too wide for our weak vision, but faith believes it possible, and waits till the eye shall see.

And the Saviour makes us feel also that the charm of *novelty* will not be wanting in that house any more than room. Every now and again our astronomers fill us with interest as they speak to us of the sudden flashing of some new star, or the fading of some star into star mist. They are sure that the marvels of the heavens have not yet all revealed themselves. It must also be so, we are sure, with that portion of the great house which is to be the home of the happy. There are many mansions. Even in this little world there are endless novelties for earnest men; mansions into which thought can wander, where feeling can repose and fancy play. As the stars in the firmament will be, not only the saints, but the glories amid which they dwell. As the circles of the daisies vary, as the path of the planets vary, as variety and novelty wait for

watchful eyes to see them everywhere, so it is in the Father's house. Even the beauty and the glory and the bliss will be free from monotony. He who enamels the fields with flowers and scatters pearls in the deep sea, He who paints His bow upon the clouds and weaves a halo round the sun and moon, will not let the home of the happy lack any novelty for the children of His love.

But *stability* as well as variety and room will characterise that home. Familiar as we are with cities on fire, with homes entombed by earthquakes, or overthrown by the ploughshare of war; dwelling as we do meantime in tents of clay, it is something to be assured of a place in a home whose builder and maker is God. There are many things yet to be shaken in the universe, but there is a rest that remaineth for true men. It is not here, however, that that rest may be enjoyed in fullest measure. There are too many things that are daily shaken to admit of that. Even Jesus, in His temporary stay on earth, felt it to be so, and hence He was glad to go home to the Father's house. For only there is there true stability. But He would share that gladness with all who love and follow Him. And so it is that He directs thought away from the



changeable on earth to the unchanging in heaven.

Hence it is the family life that is the prominent and crowning feature of that home. All the other features exist for this. The play of parental and filial feeling; the presence of the Saviour raising into sublimity all thought, all feeling, all choice; the Man, Christ Jesus, wearing our humanity and not ashamed to wear it, and in it coming into contact with all the glorified—this it is that crowns with glory the conception of the Father's house. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Out on a holiday excursion one sees many a fine house, many a pretty garden, and many a pleasant park; and though Christianly content with what falls to one's portion, can yet say, "How pleasant it would be to live in one of these fine houses." But one never sees a dwelling-house into which death does not enter, nor a garden where the flowers do not wither, nor a park over which no storm sweeps. In the light of such a thought how significant are the Saviour's words, "*My Father's House.*"

Imagine the Prince of Wales describing to a

number of country children his father's house at Windsor Castle or Balmoral Castle, and, after telling all about the history of the building, its structure, beauty, situation, and attractions, with all the wealth and adornments within and without, he were to add, "but my father is dead." In the light of such a thought think of the Saviour's words—"*My Father's House.*"

Think of the Crown Prince of Prussia sitting in the midst of a circle of foreigners, and relating to them all about his aged and royal father's house, and then adding with a heavy heart, that in the last week or two his father had been twice shot at, and the last time all but *killed*. The uncertainties of both house and inhabitant are startling. No such startling uncertainties, however, are suggested when Jesus says, "*My Father's House.*" The "living Father's" eternal house will be a rare home for men. No wonder that John should think that such a hope had power in it to purify.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE FATHER'S SUNBRIGHT CHILDREN.

THROUGH the door that was opened to John much of the inner glory was seen. Among its attractive features are the attitudes and acts of triumphant men. To those who

"Recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart,"

life becomes sublimed as it rises into the future glory. As suns are only "sunflowers of a higher light," so wise men, like the stainless stars, shine on forever in the Divine Father's smile. The fierce light of the eternal throne has nothing in it to blister the eyeballs of men who, in Christ, have seen God. For God is Father as well as King. He has a family as well as a kingdom. His family is the Royal Family, whose thoughts and ways have all become kingly. Princeliness characterises all desire and all expectation. Thus the family is commensurate with the kingdom. All life is loyal to the royal will. The sceptre of power is held

in the hand of love, so that to obey is joy and rapture.

When the Saviour tells us that the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," He gives us in a striking figure a vivid glimpse of their place and power, their beauty and glory, the honour they receive, and the influence they exert. The manifestation of the sons of God is to be a very grand thing. Counted worthy of the kingdom of God, every veil of obscurity is to be lifted off their life. Called to the "obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," their character and circumstances are to be such as to secure that Jesus shall "be admired in them." Sunbright in soul and surroundings, no cloud shall pass upon the disk of their destiny. Jesus knew how to use figures; He knew how much truth to put into them, so as never to excite a hope that could not be realised. The privileges and pursuits of a saved family, exalted to the dignity of a kingdom, with the Great Kingly Father in their midst, are held up by Jesus as a sunbright future, whose attraction should be mighty enough upon men. The sovereign's pleasure in a subject's dignity had never been so expressed before. Such an attainable ideal, were it only

a philosophic guess, or a poetic aspiration, would be quite enough to stir all that is noblest in man; but when it is presented to the human mind by Jesus Christ as the possibility of all, and the sure lot of the true; when by the faith of it life has touched its loftiest heights, and the eye, calm even in the article of death, has been fixed on that future so sunny and bright, the wonder is that any man can treat the future with disregard. To say with Edith Simcox, that "Heaven and hell are names or visions," is to give a poor account of the universe, either as fact or philosophy. For peace and purity and power, the Saviour's thought is an infinite distance above such teaching.

The Father's kingdom with His sunbright children, puts before us the future as a very attractive *reality*. We are so prone to speak of men as "creatures of a day, spouse of the worm and brother of the clay," that the intrinsic worth of man, the conscious personality, the capacity for, and the place he shall occupy in the endless life, get pushed into the background of thought and feeling. But as the Saviour puts it, there is coming to us a time when the obscurity which rests upon the nature and character of Christian men

shall pass off, and the life they have shall shine out as a glorious reality. To this point all things are tending. Meantime they wait for it, calm in the confidence of its realisation. The sun from which the Saviour drew His figure is not more real. *It* is no dream, no illusion, no spark of fire struck from the eye of fancy. Neither is the conscious life of the future. It is real. When Richter died, the friends placed the unfinished manuscript of the last book on which he was engaged on the coffin as they bore it to its resting-place, while students sung Klopstock's ode, "Thou shalt arise, my soul." Why was the manuscript placed upon the coffin? Did they mean to say that a man has to leave so much of even his noblest work unfinished when he is called away by death? That is true enough, but be sure that the wounded hearts that thronged around that coffin were leaning on a nobler thought than that. Did they mean that, like the paper of the manuscript, he would be taken hold of by physical forces and assimilated to the mere matter round about his body? That is about the measure of consolation which a good deal of modern thought would give to any of us were we in similar circumstances of sorrow. Did they mean that the deep

thoughts he had written, and the pure emotions with which he had vitalised them, and the poetic beauties he had thrown around them, would remain to a grateful country and to the commonwealth of letters when the grave had closed upon his form? That, we know, is about the only future which a portion of the science and philosophy of the present times could hold up before the eye of any one for whom the grave is opening, and whose work of thought is done. Or did they mean that the influence of that personal life which he had lived, and which he had exerted upon mind and manners, would continue and roll onward from age to age, so that in that sense he would have a future blissful and bright? If that were all, there might, indeed, be a future for his influence; but to speak of it being a future for *him*, for his personal consciousness, for his conscious happiness, would be to trifle at once with both thought and language. No. That was not enough for sorrowing hearts at the margin of the grave. They could not say, "Fare thee well for ever." They saw coming out upon their clouds of sorrow something of that sun-bright life, the fore-gleams of which were tinging and fringing, as with gold, the earth

clouds that had settled down upon and darkened their life. The manuscript of *Selina*, dealing as it did with the great idea of immortality, was laid upon the coffin as the expression of the hope of that spirit which no coffin could confine. Their sorrow required the future as a reality on which to lean.

But not only is the future put before us as a reality, but as a very attractive and glorious reality. The children are to shine as the sun. There have been dark ages amid which men with the spark of life in them have not been known outside their own home, in some cases scarcely known within it; but this obscurity is to pass off, and the humble but true souls shine out as the sun. They have kept in their day the Divine light burning on the earth, but society in its rude and persecuting ways has often been as a bushel over that light. All this is to pass away for ever. Already, to Christian thought, the day is dawning, and the far-off heights are ruddy with the glow of the coming splendour. The timid, shrinking, retiring souls, that, like the violets hidden away among the thorns, sent forth their fragrance to perfume life, but were not constitutionally adapted for the storm and stress, will come forth wearing a higher beauty which



no circumstances will conceal. All glorious within, they shall also be all glorious without. Men who in the workshops could only be silent when profane neighbours blasphemed; wives whose devotions were disturbed by the unsteady steps of husbands who were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; the quiet, the gentle, the generous, who could do many a kindly act, but cared not to have it published, will shine forth with their own measure of heavenly sunlight. Suns as stars may differ in glory, and so it may be with even the sunbright children in the kingdom of the Father. But as the sun is the brightest thing we know, it is enough that all of them shall shine as the sun. The thought is indeed stimulating, almost startling; but it is Jesus who says so, and if the truth is not with Him, it will be difficult to find it on the lips of any other teacher.

But the thought of this brightness of the future grows as we reflect that it is in the *Kingdom of the Father* the children are to shine. The circumstances are the highest and, therefore, the most testing. Ordinary genius shines bright in the village where all is dullness. In the dark even a little candle gives a bright light. But the stars are concealed

from us when the sun shines. To shine forth in the kingdom of the Father is to shine forth in the highest circumstances, and shows, therefore, what a bright thing a soul ultimately becomes that has been lit up with the truth and love of Christ. Suns may pale in its presence; for, as the image of God, renewed in righteousness and true holiness, it will be as the reflection of God himself. It is a great mystery, but mysteries throng our every step when we think of the great things that Fatherly love has done for us all through Jesus Christ.

Hence the power of this idea of Fatherhood, as it reflects itself amid the joys of the children who shine as the sun in the Father's presence. There is amid their glory the satisfaction of His heart. As a rich, good father will rejoice in the fortune and character of his well-bred children who, though they were at one time vain and foolish, are now humble and loving; so the Father rejoices over the brightness of His children, from whom the mental and moral darkness has passed away for ever. His love is satisfied. His joy is real and great, and His approving smile makes bright all grades of filial attainment and standing; while to love and obey will be to His children as natural as it is for the sun to shine.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE QUESTION OF THE FATHER.

"ATHENIANS, I honour you, and I love you, but I will obey the Deity rather than you. My whole occupation is to persuade you, young and old, that before the care of the body and of riches, before every other care, is that of the soul and of its improvement." These are the words of Socrates, so often repeated, and so worthy to be written in letters of gold. With him virtue was not a mere name. True to the light that was in him, he could not willingly degrade his noble nature. But it is to the general tendency to such degradation reference is made in the touching question which the great Father puts to men when we read, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" The parental feeling comes out strongly in the question. The pang of wounded love, of wounded honour, is not easily borne by a parent's heart. The unloving, irreverent, and disdainful attitude or act on the part of a

child with reference to a father's principles, claims, or character, inflicts pain to which no words can give expression. The haughty look is never so hurtful as when it is given to a parent. When, in social insurrection, "sons against fathers tilt the fatal lance," we have a scene not more appalling than when in spheres of essential thought and vital principle a son, through vanity or passion, gives the lie to all his father taught and did. Now it is just such a scene as this that starts up before the imagination when men are seen turning away from the love, and the law, and the life of God, and refusing Him the common honour which is due from a child to a father.

What a terrible shadow that must have been which fell upon the spirit of Jean Paul Richter when, touching lightly on the faults of his parents, he expressed the painful apprehension, "that he shall at last be obliged to love his father less." Willing to love, to honour, and revere, and yet to feel that so many things have to be forgotten, or overlooked, or pushed away from before the mind, in order that nothing may prevent the heart from rising up and going forth to a father is not a pleasant experience. Unfortunately it is not an unknown thing on the earth. But the Father

in heaven is perfect; perfect in everything that can command the love and reverence of His earthly children. Why, then, should He have to say, "If then I be a Father, where is mine honour?"

The question assumes the existence of the child capacity and obligation. It could have no meaning but for their existence. If the child nature were not there, no such rebuke could be administered, no such claim could be urged, any more than they could to the crystal or flower or star. Consciously and intentionally to render honour to the Father was a thing not only possible to them, but dutiful; and nothing could be more unfilial than to refuse to render it. Conscious of His relationship to men and of the feeling which fills His heart, the Father has surely a right to complain of the absence of love, of reverence, of obedience, and of trust. If He stood off at a cold distance from men; if it mattered little to Him what good or evil man might do; if men, in all the workings of their nature, were passive in His hand as the clay in the potter's; if no great capacity qualified them for receiving the inflowings of Divine love; if no tender pityings had brooded over them from the first; if infinite love had not nursed them on its lap,

then there might have been a seeming unreasonableness in the expectation that men should render honour. But when we remember how often, and in how many forms, the Father has uttered His wail over "the sons of the living God," over His "pleasant child;" when we call to mind the sighs and sorrows that come out in such language as, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me;" when we read such words as, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," and that warrant us to say with Dante—

"Horrible my iniquities had been,  
But Infinite Goodness hath such ample arms  
That it receives whatever turns to it;"

we feel how crimson coloured the sin must be that calls for this complaint of the Father's heart.

There is thus even amid the twilight of revelation such a brightness of Fatherly love, such an outshining of the Fatherly nature and relations, that all the heights of human capacity, possibility, and duty, become as it were sublimed thereby. From the first, man has walked the earth and sailed the seas as a

son of God. When he has sung of the stars, it is only as a son of God could sing of them. When he has dipped into the future far as human eyes could see, it is only as a son of God could take in the coming gloom or glory. But all this power and greatness of nature only renders more dark and degrading the conduct that refuses to render love and reverence to God as Father, and makes this question cut with a keen edge into the very heart of human character. It only renders the cup, large though it be, and bitter as are the elements it contains, which man has to drink, a just and wise retribution. For, when the heart has become unfilial, unfriendly, and unfit in every way for reciprocating affection, there is nothing for it but to be eaten up of its own unhealthy and unholy feeling. Such, we may be sure, must be the case wherever a created moral being refuses the love and obedience due to the Father. Refined sensibilities can have little sympathy with anything that offers insult to infinite love. Wise thought has no shield to defend such conduct, and hence the Father's complaint will find an echo in the heart of every dutiful child.

Meantime, however, the Father's question is meant to recall even unfilial children to a

sense of the wrong they are doing, of the disorder they are creating, of the sorrow they are causing, and of the distance that daily increases between His heart and theirs. The ruins of a heart, great and gloomy as they are, are not things which the Father can look upon as we do upon some historic castle or temple which force has dismantled and time defaced. It were sad enough if it only meant the ruin of some choice bit of workmanship maliciously brought about by wills that oppose what He delights in; but it is unspeakably worse when it is the ruin of His child, the child of His love, the child that resembles Him, but who by his own choice works this wrong. It is not possible that infinite love can view unmoved a single case of such ruin. And yet what battlefields and rocking thrones, and seething cities, and homes that are little else than four square walls, within which no love reigns, He has to look upon! Were it not that there are so many logical contradictions bound up in it, one might almost sympathise with the notion that the Father chooses not to look at these things, and therefore has no feeling about them. Sternly refusing to submit to the spell of mere fancy, however, we can understand with what



feeling the words are spoken, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, 'My Father?'"

In our little earthly homes no child may designedly strike a blow at the peace of the family. Within so charmed a circle the loyalty of love is demanded all round. The "gladsome looks of household love," as Mrs. Hemans sings, must not be clouded by any unkind, discourteous deed or word. We set forth, in many aspects, by song and story, the beauty of that home where love is the presiding genius. Sad is the family history of which love is not the keynote. It is designed that, as from a fountain, streams of parental love should flow down into the young hearts that can only live by love. But it is equally designed that these streams should, in some way, remount in answering love to the parent's heart. It is so love's circle is completed. How beautiful it is to hear Kant, the great philosopher, saying, "I shall never forget my mother, for she planted and nourished in me the first germ of the good; she opened my heart to the impressions of nature, she awakened and expanded my conceptions, and her teachings have had a lasting and salutary influence upon my life." His father taught him truthfulness, and his mother taught him holiness and love.

But God, in a high sense, is both father and mother to us, pouring light upon our thoughts and love into our feelings, and blessedness into every aspect of our life. Shall we not then be responsive to all this Fatherly dealing with us? To increase the discords that are already so very abundant in the human family by encouraging, through example, disobedience and disloyalty, is a sad return for such unutterable love. Why should not men behave like God's children? Why should they not open their ears and turn their faces to Him? Without being materialists in their creed, they say to a stock, "Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth; for they have turned their back unto me and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us." The runaway children are always a sore grief to the parent. Nothing can be sadder than for an earthly father to strike his son's name out of the will; but how must the heavenly Father feel when He must needs let the "runagate continue in scarceness," and ultimately blot from His book the name of a man who might have been a happy child in the happy home for ever. It is then, in mingling tones of love and sorrow, He says, "If, then, I be a Father, where is mine honour?"

## CHAPTER XVI.

## CONCLUSION.

A LEADING statesman has said that "progress is disturbance." There is much truth, we imagine, gathered up into the condensed saying. You cannot make a highway through a forest, or a railway through a city, without disturbance. You cannot erect a hall of justice or a house of God without disturbance. You cannot carry any great measure of truth and righteousness through any legislative assembly without a great amount of disturbance. Displacement is necessary and unavoidable, alike amid material and mental things, when any new step of progress is taken. As in social and political affairs, so in questions that concern philosophy and religion. Ideas are revolutionary. Thoughts become the ruling forces. New orders of things shape themselves as new thoughts find expression, or old and forgotten thoughts are revived.

More than anything else has the assertion

that God loves all men sent theological thought forward upon new lines, and turned the religious mind to the consideration of the Divine Fatherhood. It has given a distinct feature to theology; a feature that broadly separates it from the creeds and cramped notions that have largely stamped the thought and life of many men. Few events have occurred, at least in Scotland, that have so troubled the waters as the bold and consistent assertion that God loves all men. It is not so long since it was anything but safe to one's position and comfort, in connection with large religious denominations, to make that assertion. But it has been made, and made with beautiful theological consistency, and without in any way endangering the foundation on which a true theology and religion rest. As might be expected, the assertion of such a doctrine, where Calvinism has been the dominant creed, must displace many things ere, under its kindly sceptre, order can be secured in the arrangements of theological thought. Possibly amid the disturbance necessarily attending the path of progress, the idea of the Divine Fatherhood has not always had its legitimate place, and been handled in harmony with its relations to other essential truths. It is difficult to keep

thought from running to extremes, especially under the influence of a new awakening. And hence it need scarcely surprise any one to find, that in connection with theories of the atonement, an emphasis has sometimes been given to the idea of Fatherhood almost amounting to an exaggeration. There are representations of it that err by excess as well as by defect. It requires great mental balance to deal with revolutionary thought, so as to avoid the painful results too often witnessed, when men, setting out on unknown ways, lose themselves. In time, however, matters become adjusted, and many things held in solution crystallise around a great formative centre, such as we have in the thought that God loves all men.

It is seen, for example, on the one hand, how Fatherly that love must be. Whatever other elements may be in it, it is as a Father's love it reaches and takes hold of the race. Like a great lost child, wandering in its wickedness, the race is still dear to the Divine heart, so that all that love can wisely do for it shall be done. It is seen, on the other hand, with what wisdom that love must find expression, so that no member in the rebellious family shall find encouragement in his rebellion, and no interest of the family, as a whole, be exposed to peril.

Between these leading principles, as between protecting walls, thought can find a safe and prosperous pathway to a consistent resting-place on the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood. That resting-place once reached, a widening of thought takes place, and a broader field of theological interest is surveyed. Men are able to discriminate between nature and character, between relationship and the grateful recognition of it, between sin and mere misfortune, between a desire to pardon and a wise and legitimate way of doing it. Jesus Christ shall then be not only the highest expression of the Divine Fatherliness, but, at the same time, the indispensable medium through whose propitiation the rebellious child can be forgiven.

Cousin's maxim, borrowed, it is said, from Leibnitz, is somewhat applicable here: "Systems are true by what they affirm, false by what they deny." All round the circle of this discussion the danger lies in the strong tendency to deny. The affirmations may embrace great and essential ideas, but it is in the denials that the vitiating elements lurk. All the findings of the scientists, for example, about force and law, are valuable, and increase our knowledge of the universe; but when, on the basis of these findings, the personal God is denied,

science becomes unscientific, becomes guilty, in short, of stepping, by a bold assertion, into territory which in no way belongs to her. In the same way theologians are in danger by their denials; as, for example, when asserting the Fatherhood of God in relation to Christian men, they deny its relations to all men everywhere. When, again, as another instance, the atonement of Jesus is held up as a revelation of the Father's love, or as an illustration of the way in which He, as the Son of God, could sympathetically identify Himself with sinful men, and of the moral power which His life and death exerts upon the subjective life of the race, there is most glorious truth affirmed; but when it is denied that there is or can be more than all this in the atonement, there is in the denial an attitude down upon which all the pressure of the Bible bears. The atonement has something in it that terminates on God as well as on man. It is an offering unto God. Jesus Christ does something *for* man as well as *in* man; but to deny the one half of the truth is to make the other of none effect. When, once more, it is asserted that the atonement was made for all who believe, there is delightful truth in the assertion; but when it is denied that it was made

for any more, a position is assumed which it is impossible to maintain. It is these, and denials such as these, that disturb the harmony of theological thought. Negations are fruitful thistles in many a mental garden, and occupy valuable ground, besides being rather difficult things to handle. The mind whose attitude is that of one that has measured the whole territory of thought, is not the best for dealing with the whole subject of the Divine Fatherhood.

When, in 1865, Ernest Naville published his eloquent little work entitled *The Heavenly Father*, and said in his first lecture, "Present circumstances are serious, not for religion itself, which cannot be imperilled, but for minds which run the risk of losing their balance and their support," many thought that the brilliant author was too timid, was seeing rocks ahead simply in the sea of his imagination, and was exciting, in connection with religious subjects, an alarm for which there was not the remotest occasion. And yet, who in looking at our many periodicals,—weekly, monthly, quarterly—with many a pretentious volume besides, as they deal with religious subjects in their scientific, philosophical, and social aspects, would think that within only a few years there should be so much ground for the alarm-



ing words of the same author, when he says, "Beneath the social disturbances of the day, beneath the discussion of science, beneath the anxiety of some and the sadness of others, beneath the ironical and more or less insulting joy of a few, we read at the foundation of many intellectual manifestations of our time these gloomy words, 'Henceforth, no more God for humanity!'" This effort to take from men the idea of the living God, to take from the weary heart the loving Father, to leave the human race in a state of endless orphanhood, is surely the saddest business to which the human intellect has ever yet been yoked. The confidence in many cases, and the pride in some, with which everything that is fitted to shake the common faith in the idea of the personal God is announced, is the most startling feature of this nineteenth century. Even while we confidently cling to the opinion that this wave of materialistic opposition to the Christian idea of God has spent its force, and that the foundations of the faith, like rocks rooted far beneath the troubled waters of the deep, cannot be disturbed, we at the same time cannot fail to see what wrecks the broken waters bear away upon their surface. To be able, amid this commotion of thought

and things, to see the idea of the Divine Fatherhood reflected in human nature, in human history, in human philosophy, and in the Bible, reassures the mind. The human personality, combining in one living unity thought, feeling, and choice, working upon all the higher moral and spiritual plains, is a lofty and secure standpoint from which to survey the troubled waters of materialistic controversy, and in which also to see reflected the idea of the Divine Fatherhood. The creature has a Creator. The child has a Father. The responsible subject has an authoritative Law-giver. The religious being has a God. To stand again at the centre of the Christian consciousness, and recognise the child-relationship, the child-feeling, the child-conduct, is to let fresh light in upon the ways the Divine Fatherhood is reflected. Throwing ourselves back among the thoughts and feelings of men who dwelt nearest the Great Sun Mind of the universe, and of whom bards and prophets speak, we can learn how they were taught the doctrine of the Fatherhood, how they believed it, and how they enjoyed it. Placing ourselves in the presence of the Great Teacher, we learn from His lips all about this Fatherhood in its universal and in its special aspects. We see

the Fatherly feeling going after the erring children, providing a way for their return, and rejoicing over them when they are brought home. Thus the Fatherly life, rectitude, love, munificence, and mercy, will lead us, despite all that modern materialism will say, to think with Robert Boyle of "that Opificer who formed the eye," and gratefully, with Sir Isaac Newton, "to return thanks to the Father above for creating us, and giving us food, and raiment, and other blessings of this life," and to say, as Jesus Christ bids us, "Our Father who art in heaven." Reptiles, laws, forces, protoplasm, and cells, may have meanings that are deep enough, but they are not *The Father*.

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THE END.

